

# The Expansion of the Early Islamic State

*Edited by*  
**Fred M. Donner**



The Formation of the Classical Islamic World

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**THE FORMATION OF THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC WORLD**

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General Editor: Lawrence I. Conrad

Volume 5

# The Expansion of the Early Islamic State

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Volume 5

# The Expansion of the Early Islamic State

edited by  
Fred M. Donner

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

Since the days of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), generally regarded as the founder of Islamic studies as a field of modern scholarship, the formative period in Islamic history has remained a prominent theme for research. In Goldziher's time it was possible for scholars to work with the whole of the field and practically all of its available sources, but more recently the increasing sophistication of scholarly methodologies, a broad diversification in research interests, and a phenomenal burgeoning of the catalogued and published source material available for study have combined to generate an increasing “compartmentalisation” of research into very specific areas, each with its own interests, priorities, agendas, methodologies, and controversies. While this has undoubtedly led to a deepening and broadening of our understanding in all of these areas, and hence is to be welcomed, it has also tended to isolate scholarship in one subject from research in other areas, and even more so from colleagues outside of Arab-Islamic studies, not to mention students and others seeking to familiarise themselves with a particular topic for the first time.

*The Formation of the Classical Islamic World* is a reference series that seeks to address this problem by making available a critical selection of the published research that has served to stimulate and define the way modern scholarship has come to understand the formative period of Islamic history, for these purposes taken to mean approximately AD 600–950. Each of the volumes in the series is edited by an expert on its subject, who has chosen a number of studies that taken together serve as a cogent introduction to the state of current knowledge on the topic, the issues and problems particular to it, and the range of scholarly opinion informing it. Articles originally published in languages other than English have been translated, and editors have provided critical introductions and select bibliographies for further reading.

A variety of criteria, varying by topic and in accordance with the judgements of the editors, have determined the contents of these volumes. In some cases an article has been included because it represents the best of current scholarship, the “cutting edge” work from which future research seems most likely to profit. Other articles—certainly no less valuable contributions—have been taken up for the skillful way in which they synthesise the state of scholarly knowledge. Yet others are older studies that—if in some ways now superseded—nevertheless merit attention for their illustration of thinking or conclusions that have long been important, or for the decisive stimulus they have provided to scholarly discussion. Some volumes cover themes that have emerged fairly recently, and here it has been necessary to include articles from outside the period covered by the series, as illustrations of paradigms and methodologies that may prove useful as research



develops. Chapters from single author monographs have been considered only in very exceptional cases, and a certain emphasis has been encouraged on important studies that are less readily available than others.

In the present state of the field of early Arab-Islamic studies, in which it is routine for heated controversy to rage over what scholars a generation ago would have regarded as matters of simple fact, it is clearly essential for a series such as this to convey some sense of the richness and variety of the approaches and perspectives represented in the available literature. An effort has thus been made to gain broad international participation in editorial capacities, and to secure the collaboration of colleagues representing differing points of view. Throughout the series, however, the range of possible options for inclusion has been very large, and it is of course impossible to accommodate all of the outstanding research that has served to advance a particular subject. A representative selection of such work does, however, appear in the bibliography compiled by the editor of each volume at the end of the introduction.

The interests and priorities of the editors, and indeed, of the General Editor, will doubtless be evident throughout. Hopefully, however, the various volumes will be found to achieve well-rounded and representative syntheses useful not as the definitive word on their subjects—if, in fact, one can speak of such a thing in the present state of research—but as introductions comprising well-considered points of departure for more detailed inquiry.

A series pursued on this scale is only feasible with the good will and cooperation of colleagues in many areas of expertise. The General Editor would like to express his gratitude to the volume editors for the investment of their time and talents in an age when work of this kind is grossly undervalued, to the translators who have taken such care with the articles entrusted to them, and to Dr John Smedley and his staff at Ashgate for their support, assistance and guidance throughout.

Lawrence I. Conrad

# INTRODUCTION

## The Expansion of the Early Islamic State

Fred M. Donner

### **The First Expansion of Islam as a Problem of World History**

If we are to judge the importance of historical phenomena by the range and duration of their consequences, the appearance and rapid first expansion of Islam, a process that began in the early seventh century CE and that continued, in desultory fashion, well into the eighth century, must be reckoned among the most important chapters in all of world history. For, there can be no doubt that this process transformed much of the ancient world profoundly, and in some ways, apparently, with noteworthy swiftness. The significance of this process was indeed the focal point of the famous “Pirenne thesis” advanced by the great Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), who argued that the rise of Islam in the seventh century definitively ended the civilization of classical antiquity and inaugurated, or generated, the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Many aspects of Pirenne’s thesis were severely criticized by scholars in the years after its appearance, and it is now no longer accepted in its original form; but Pirenne did put his finger on the undeniable fact that the formerly unified “classical” world, clustered around the Mediterranean Sea, rapidly evolved in this period into two quite different cultural worlds on its northern and southern littorals—the early Medieval European and the early Islamic worlds—even if the role of Islam (or Muslims) in this change was not one of simple cause and effect as Pirenne had thought. Pirenne’s work raised significant questions that even today still stimulate productive debate. At any rate, there can be no doubt that the changes that we associate with the appearance and first expansion of Islam represent a kind of historical milestone.

This process of expansion has, however, often puzzled historians, who have offered widely divergent explanations of why and how the expansion could take place, and even of just what its actual nature was. Part of this challenge of explanation is attributable to the fact that what we here call “the first expansion of Islam” actually embraces two different, but intricately interrelated, phenomena—the appearance and spread of a new religion, Islam, and the rise of a

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<sup>1</sup> Pirenne’s theories were presented especially in his books *Medieval Cities: their origins and the revival of trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1925) and *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1937). A good introduction to the debate over Pirenne’s ideas is Alfred F. Havighurst (ed.), *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism and Revision* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1958).

new state, ideologically motivated by Islamic concepts, and its drive to imperial expansion.

This dual character of the early expansion sometimes led historians to confuse features of one aspect with those of the other. Many earlier studies of the expansion, for example, focused above all on the military campaigns that, our sources tell us, were a significant part of the process; hence they tended to conceptualize the expansion simply as “conquest”, sometimes ignoring other aspects of the process of state-formation and state-expansion of which the military campaigning was a part, as well as ideological and social dimensions related to the spread of Islam as a faith and as a cultural system. To be sure, it can sometimes be difficult to decide whether a particular change was a consequence of the conquests themselves, or whether it is better seen as a consequence of the emergence of the Islamic faith or of the Islamic state; indeed, in many cases one is entitled to ask whether it is possible to separate the consequences of the three processes of military conquest, state-formation, and establishment of religious hegemony.

### **Basic Outlines of the Expansion**

Except for revisionist studies appearing since the 1960s (which we shall discuss subsequently), scholarship on the early expansion of Islam since the nineteenth century has accepted the general outlines of the picture of “what happened” conveyed to us by traditional Islamic sources. According to this consensus view, Islam began with the prophet Muḥammad (d. 632 CE), who preached strict monotheism in the polytheistic surroundings of his home town of Mecca and brought forth the Qurʾān as God’s revelation. In the face of increasing opposition from his fellow-townsmen of Mecca, Muḥammad and his followers emigrated in 622 CE to Yathrib (Medina), where they established the first autonomous community of Muslims with Muḥammad as its leader. In Medina, this first Muslim community gradually grew in size and influence until, by the prophet’s death in 11/632, it had come to dominate most of western Arabia (including the other major towns and many nomadic groups) and could be seen as the embryo of a new state. The prophet seems to have inaugurated the process of Islam’s expansion by dispatching, during the last years of his life, a series of campaigns against increasingly distant objectives in northern Arabia, such as Khaybar and Dūmat al-Jandal, and even on the fringes of southern Syria, such as Mu’ta. The goal of these campaigns seems to have been to secure the allegiance of these communities to the idea of monotheism, and their submission of taxes to Muḥammad’s regime.

Upon the prophet’s death, his followers decided that they should remain a united political community, and that one of the prophet’s close companions,

whom they styled *amīr al-mu'minīn* or “commander of the believers”, should lead them. The choice ultimately fell on Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–634), Muḥammad’s father-in-law and one of his most intimate advisers, but not, apparently, without some disagreement and intense debate within the community. During this period, some groups in Arabia that had earlier submitted to the prophet’s authority tried to regain their political independence from Medina; some even attempted to take advantage of the Muslims’ temporary disarray to attack Medina. In response, Abū Bakr and the Muslims in Medina organized a series of military expeditions against rebellious or hitherto unsubdued groups in Arabia to quell these strivings for autonomy, which the (later) Muslim chroniclers characterize as *ridḍa* or “apostasy”.

The so-called *ridḍa* wars mark the beginnings of the new Islamic state’s first major expansion; during them the regime in Medina was able to reduce to tax-paying status almost all the inhabitants of Arabia, even in distant Yemen and Oman and in centers of powerful opposition like the large oasis of al-Yamāma in eastern Arabia, home of the powerful Ḥanīfa tribe. The final campaigns of the *ridḍa* wars brought the Muslim forces into contact with Arabic-speaking groups on the fringes of Syria and Iraq; by subduing or drawing them into their movement, the Muslims precipitated a clash with the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, to which these groups had formerly been subject.

But the clash with the empires was not merely accidental; it appears that the Muslim leadership had settled upon a policy of expansion that aimed to seize as much territory from the empires as possible, and perhaps even to overthrow them. Already in the last months of Abū Bakr’s life, and under the second *amīr al-mu'minīn*, ‘Umar (r. 13–23/634–644), well-organized military columns were being dispatched against key objectives in both southern Syria and southern Iraq. Four major forces were sent against Byzantine Syria, and two against Iraq (one to the center and the other to the south of the country, respectively). In several years of on-and-off campaigning during the 630s, these forces managed to occupy major cities and towns of these regions and to defeat the standing armies of the two empires in a number of pitched battles that marked the decisive transfer of regional hegemony from the Byzantines or Sasanians to the Muslims ruling from Medina: in Byzantine Syria, the battles of Ajnādayn and, especially, Yarmūk; in Sasanian Iraq, the battle of al-Qādisiyya. From Syria, a force marched along the Sinai coast into Egypt and seized this important province from the Byzantines. Already by about 640 CE, then, a mere 18 years after Muḥammad’s death, the Muslims ruling from Medina had come to control a vast area encompassing not only the whole Arabian peninsula, but also most of Egypt, geographical Syria, and Iraq—in other words, Arabia and all the open lands adjoining it to the north, up to the Taurus and Zagros mountain barriers.

The Muslims consolidated their control over these newly-conquered areas by establishing a number of central garrison towns (*amṣār*); these quickly outgrew

their original character as places to billet troops and developed into large cities that attracted both new migrants from Arabia, some of them families of the soldiers, and many local people. In Syria, the Muslims seem to have used vacant quarters in existing towns, notably Ḥimṣ, as their main military centers, whereas in Iraq two new settlements, al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra, were established adjacent to existing towns (al-Ḥīra and al-Ubulla), which were soon absorbed by their new neighbors. In Egypt, the Muslims created a new camp-town, al-Fuṣṭāṭ, adjacent to the old Byzantine stronghold of Babylon (near modern Cairo).

These *amṣār* served as the staging-points for further conquests by the Muslims to the north, east, and west. During the reigns of ʿUmar and his successor, the third *amīr al-muʿminīn* ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (23–35/644–656), a series of campaigns were sent against the Iranian plateau. The remnants of the Sasanian army were decisively defeated at the battle of Nihāvand in the Zagros region, and later expeditions, most launched from al-Baṣra, brought ever more distant parts of Iran and its main cities—Hamadhān, Qom, Qazvīn, Rayy, Qūmis, Iṣṭakhr, Dārābgird, Kāshān, Yazd, Harāt in Afghanistan, and many others—within the Muslims’ control. Other forces subdued the lowlands of Khūzistān and the highlands of Azerbaijan to the north of Iraq. From Syria, armies were dispatched against northern Mesopotamia and Armenia and brought important towns, such as Edessa, Mosul, and the Armenian capital at Dvin, under Medina’s sway. From Syria also were organized raids northward across the Taurus mountains and deep into Anatolia, the Byzantine heartland; these were launched on an almost annual basis, but Byzantine opposition here proved very stiff and, despite some notably deep penetrations over the years (sometimes even to the walls of Constantinople itself), the Muslims’ frontier with the Byzantines stabilized for a long period just north of a chain of border-fortresses they established at Ṭarsūs, Maṣṣīṣa (Mopsuestia), and other places near the Taurus. From Egypt, periodic raids were dispatched along the Mediterranean littoral into Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, and treaties were made with the kings of Nubia, southward along the Nile.

The murder of ʿUthmān in Medina by mutineers from the *amṣār* in 35/656 unleashed five years of struggle within the Muslim community that we call the First Civil War (or, in the terminology of later Muslim chroniclers, the first *fitna*). This period saw several rivals competing for leadership of the new Islamic state: above all Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (a relative of the slain ʿUthmān) and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a cousin and son-in-law of the prophet). ʿAlī was at first recognized by the Medinese as the fourth *amīr al-muʿminīn* (35–40/656–661), but in the end it was Muʿāwiya who emerged victorious after ʿAlī was murdered by a disgruntled supporter, and the Muslim community finally recognized Muʿāwiya as the fifth *amīr al-muʿminīn* (r. 40–60/661–680). The civil war marked a lull in the process of expansion, since key figures in the leadership of the community were too preoccupied with it to worry about campaigning on now-distant frontiers.

Mu'āwīya had been for many years 'Uthmān's governor of Syria, so he moved the capital of the Muslim empire from Medina to Damascus, and it was from Syria that all of the succeeding rulers of Mu'āwīya's family, the Umayyad dynasty, exercised their rule. Under the Umayyads (661–750), the state was once more able to devote attention to the expansion. Many of the campaigns in Mu'āwīya's days aimed to consolidate Muslim control of areas, particularly in Iran, that had been occupied earlier but were still only weakly controlled. In 680, the community entered upon another period of turmoil over leadership, the Second Civil War (680–692), that, once again, brought the expansion to a halt. When unity and order were restored, however, the Umayyad 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705) and his sons al-Walīd (r. 86–96/705–715) and Sulaymān (r. 96–99/715–717) were able to pursue vigorous campaigns of expansion and conquest. From this time forward, moreover, the military and administrative institutions of the Umayyad state were more fully developed and it is clear that campaigns were a deliberate and regular part of imperial policy, intended to fulfil the ideological imperative of striving to bring the whole world within the realm of the empire. In eastern Iran, new areas were brought within the Umayyads' domain: Gorgān and Khurāsān, and even the regions adjacent to and beyond the Oxus river. A force was dispatched for the first time to distant Sind (the Indus valley, modern Pakistan) by 711 and established a permanent Muslim presence there. Muslim control over Armenia was strengthened and aggressive campaigns launched against Byzantium, including a lengthy (but ultimately unsuccessful) siege of Constantinople in 97/715–716. In the west, renewed campaigns across North Africa led to the conquest of Ifrīqiya (modern Tunisia) and other parts of the Maghreb, and in 711 a Muslim force crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and, within a few years, vanquished the last Visigothic king and took control of most of the Iberian peninsula. From there they mounted campaigns against southern and central Gaul, raiding as far as the Loire valley (battle of Tours or Poitiers, 732 CE) and establishing their control for several decades over some towns in southern France, such as Carcassonne. These campaigns were now so distant from the center of the empire in Syria, and even from the earlier *amṣār*, that additional "second-stage" *amṣār* were established as centers of military and, eventually, cultural activity: in the east, Marv in Khursāsan, to which thousands of fighting men and their families were transferred from al-Baṣra, and in the west, Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya. In al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), long a dependency of either Egypt or Qayrawān, a provincial capital developed at Cordoba, and many towns and rural districts had significant numbers of Muslim settlers, of Syrian, Arabian, or North African origin.

Within little more than a hundred years following the death of the prophet Muḥammad, then, the early Muslim community had established a state in western Arabia and engineered its expansion to embrace all of Arabia and most of the Near East, from Spain to India and Armenia to Yemen. Clearly military action was

a central part of this process of expansion, so much so that most scholars who have studied the expansion have referred to it as the “Islamic Conquest” or the “Arab Conquest”. This emphasis on conquest, often neglecting other aspects of the expansion, may be in part a reflection of the Islamic sources themselves, which have a special genre of *futūḥ* literature the object of which was to relate how the many towns and districts of this vast empire came to be part of it. Actually, however, the word *futūḥ* does not mean “conquest”, although it is often so translated; its use in relation to the expansion is probably to be associated with the Qurʾānic use of the term to mean a favor or act of grace granted by God to His faithful believers (cf. Qurʾān 2:76 and many other passages). The implication being made by the purveyors of the *futūḥ* literature, then, was that the Muslims’ domination of these territories was legitimate because they were literally something bestowed upon them by God. In any case, the existence of the *futūḥ* genre may have contributed to the emphasis on “conquest” in scholarly discussions of the expansion. We shall return to this point below, in discussion recent revisionist views of the expansion.

### **Scholarly Interpretations of the First Expansion of Islam**

The expansion sketched so briefly above posed many problems for historians, who were puzzled by its astonishing scale, by its swiftness, by the Muslims’ success in overcoming the armies of well-established empires, by their ability to maintain their hegemony over much larger populations of non-Muslims, by the persistence with which an expansionist policy was pursued over several generations, and by many other matters. Until the rise of revisionist scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s, most scholars who worked on the early expansion of Islam subscribed to a common set of assumptions in their work: (a) that the Arabic-Islamic sources provided a generally reliable picture of the events of the expansion, (b) that the religion of Islam, as taught by Muḥammad, was clearly defined from early in his career, particularly in terms of its relationship to Christianity and Judaism, (c) that Islam provided the ideological motivation for the expansion/conquest, particularly through the doctrine of *jihād* or “striving in God’s way”, and (d) that the early Islamic state, headed by the *amīr al-muʾminīn*, was the key institution in organizing and directing the waves of military conquest that were a central component of the expansion.

Viewing the expansion through the lens of these assumptions (which, to repeat, most scholars did), generated a number of interrelated problems of interpretation. In the following, we discuss briefly several of the more salient of these issues.

## WHAT CAUSED THE CONQUESTS?

A first answer to this question had, of course, been offered by the traditional Islamic sources, which presented an essentially theological interpretation of the conquests. In this view, the expansion of Islam was an expression of God's will for mankind, and was linked to the religious dedication of the first Muslims, who, galvanized by the new faith, embarked on their march to establish the universal sovereignty of Islam and the Islamic state. It was also due, in their view, to the fact that God favored the Muslims and had a hand in their victories on the battlefield.

Most non-Muslim historians, however, either rejected this religious interpretation outright, or sought to temper it by calling attention to other, non-religious factors, that in their view contributed to the movement. Some European authors of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, themselves thoroughly steeped in contemporary concepts of nationalism of a decidedly racist cast, saw the expansion as one chapter in a series of mass migrations of Semites from the Arabian peninsula, and thus as not really related to Islam as a doctrine. This "nationalist" interpretation was particularly pronounced in the works of Hugo Winckler<sup>2</sup> and Leone Caetani (Chapter 1).<sup>3</sup> The latter's work on early Islam, in particular his massive *Annali dell'Islam* in ten bulky folio volumes, was very influential at the beginning of the twentieth century, and his views were picked up in subsequent years by Thomas Arnold and many others. Arnold noted the religious tolerance of the conquerors—who did not require the conquered peoples to convert to Islam—as evidence that the expansion movement was not rooted in religious conviction.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, such ideas continued to be repeated even many years later.<sup>5</sup>

Other Western scholars saw the original impetus for the expansion movement as Islam's goal of subjecting the whole world to Islamic rule. However, they puzzled over how this broad goal was translated effectively into the military conquests described in the sources. That is, they asked what drew or induced people to join the conquest armies in the first place. They concluded that the expansion was driven by economic factors—mainly by the cupidity of the conquerors. Caetani argued that most Arabs had no real religious fervor and

<sup>2</sup> Hugo Winckler, "Arabisch-Semitisch-Orientalisch", *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptische Gesellschaft*, Berlin 6 (1901), 151–374.

<sup>3</sup> Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (10 vols., Milano: U. Hoepli, 1905–1926), II, 855–61; idem, *Studi di Storia Orientale* I (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1911), 364–371.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (2nd ed. London: A. Constable, 1913), 45–71.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1950), 55–56: "Initially the great conquests were an expansion not of Islam but of the Arab nation, driven by the pressure of overpopulation in its native peninsula to seek an outlet in the neighboring countries. It is one of the series of migrations which carried the Semites time and again into the Fertile Crescent and beyond". It should be noted that this passage remains unchanged in the revised edition of 1993 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 55).



stated sarcastically that their “religion” could be reduced to the satisfaction of their sensual desires. Carl Heinrich Becker, similarly, argued that economic inducements, not religion, were of fundamental importance as a cause of the conquests.<sup>6</sup>

A definite advance came in 1956 with the appearance of two penetrating studies by G.H. Bousquet (Chapters 2 and 3).<sup>7</sup> In them he not only demonstrated the serious weaknesses of the “nationalist”/Semitic migration and economic motivation theories, but argued effectively that religious motivations could not be reduced to being simply a cover for materialist incentives. As he pointed out, Muḥammad is universally recognized as having been the bearer of a religious message, and a century after the conquests a new civilization was crystallizing around *fiqh*, religious law—so it would be strange to argue that the conquests that connected these two facts and established a new society was not religious in character.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the fact that the conquerors did not stress conversion of subject peoples does not mean that the conquerors were not motivated by religious idea. Bousquet also made, apparently for the first time, a number of important analytical distinctions of crucial importance to understanding the early expansion of Islam. One is to differentiate between the causes of the conquests themselves—that is, the factors that caused the movement to begin in the first place—and the causes of the conquests’ success once it had gotten underway. Another is the importance of distinguishing between different phases of the expansion movement: particularly between the earliest phases (roughly up to the First Civil War), before the state was well-articulated, and later phases, when the Umayyad dynasty ruled over a more highly-developed state with a standing army, the beginnings of a bureaucracy, and so on.<sup>9</sup> Building on Bousquet’s work, it was proposed by the present writer in 1981 that the conquests were in part the result of the superior level of social and political integration introduced into Arabian society by the rise of Islam, which resulted in the crystallization of an embryonic state and put at its disposal the resources of manpower needed to fuel the expansion.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> C.H. Becker, “Der Islam als Problem”, in his *Islamstudien* (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1924), I, 1–23. See also Henri Lammens, *Le berceau de l’Islam* (Rome, 1914), 116–21 and 174–77, who emphasizes, in addition to climatological factors and hunger, the penchant for raiding of the bedouins. For Caetani, see the works cited in note 3.

<sup>7</sup> G.H. Bousquet, “Quelques remarques critiques et sociologiques sur la conquête arabe et les théories émises à ce sujet”, in *Studi Orientalistici in Onore de Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, I (Roma: Istituto per l’Oriente, 1956), 52–60; idem, “Observations sur la nature et causes de la conquête arabe”, *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956), 37–52.

<sup>8</sup> Bousquet, “Quelques remarques...” 59–60.

<sup>9</sup> On these points see also F.M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3–9; idem, “The Islamic Conquests”, in Youssef Choueiri (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 28–51.

<sup>10</sup> Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, esp. 251–71.

The puzzle posed by the rapid expansion of Islam (that is, of the early Islamic state) led some to consider more generally the relationship between a religious leader and states in which nomads played an important part, and to look for parallels in other historical settings. Included in this collection is one such exercise in comparative history, John J. Saunders's study of the first expansion of Islam and the Mongol conquests (Chapter 4).<sup>11</sup>

At root, however, the question of what caused the conquests forces us to consider what kind of movement we think Islam originally was. As noted above, for almost all writers before about 1970, this was answered *a priori* by the assumptions they embraced—that Islam was a proselytizing religious movement bent on spreading Islamic hegemony. Since 1970, however, some other answers have been proposed, but these take us into the terrain of recent revisionist interpretations and so will be dealt with below.

#### WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONQUESTS' SUCCESS?

Bousquet's articles had noted the importance of distinguishing between the causes that initiated the conquests and the reasons for their success, once they had begun. The question of why and how the conquests succeeded proved, in its own right, to be quite challenging to historians, because the traditional view of the conquests presents it as a movement that originated in and was first sustained from an area—western Arabia—that had little, if any, of the resources and infrastructure usually considered essential to sustain a military expansion. Yet, somehow the movement succeeded in challenging the two “great powers” of the day, which obviously did have access to such resources and infrastructure. In a nutshell, the first expansion of Islam seemed to be a conquest that succeeded against staggering practical odds in terms of political economy.

Medieval Muslim authors had sometimes attributed this success to God's support for His believers on the battlefield. Western writers, rejecting such supernatural interventions, attempted to explain the conundrum of Islam's early success by resorting to a variety of mundane factors. One argument was that the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, after a long and bitter struggle with one another, were in a weakened state and their armies too battered to offer effective defense against the invaders from Arabia.<sup>12</sup> Although there may be some merit to this argument for the Sasanians, it has recently been shown that the Byzantine

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<sup>11</sup> John J. Saunders, “The Nomad as Empire Builder: A Comparison of the Arab and Mongol Conquests”, *Diogenes* 52 (1965), 79–103. Another comparison of the same phenomena is found in Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 18–26. The relationship of the early Islamic state to Arabian nomads was the focus of analysis in Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*.

<sup>12</sup> Caetani in particular (see note 3) emphasized this view.

armies were still forces to be reckoned with at the time of their first contact with the Muslims.<sup>13</sup> Other factors stressed were the zeal of the Muslim warriors inspired by their new faith, the presence of good commanders and of leaders with organizational skills and experience in the Muslim armies, or the disaffection of the Monophysite populations of Syria and Egypt because of oppressive Byzantine religious policy; these were advanced by both Bousquet and by Marius Canard in an important essay on military elements in the conquest (Chapter 5).<sup>14</sup> On the military side, Gustave von Grunebaum stressed the advantage to the Muslims of “inner lines of communication” (Chapter 6).<sup>15</sup> In recent years, a renewed emphasis has come to be placed on the importance of religion in the movement, particularly in creating cadres of disciplined warriors in the armies of conquest; a good example is found in the general book on the rise of Islam by Christian Décobert (Chapter 7).<sup>16</sup>

#### WHAT WERE THE MAIN CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONQUESTS?

Surprisingly, fewer scholars have tackled this issue explicitly or comprehensively. Some have addressed aspects of the consequences without linking them to the conquests themselves. When we begin to consider what the impact of the conquests was on the Near East, however, we quickly realize that a number of major issues are involved—so many, indeed, and of such varied kinds, that it is possible to include in this collection of essays only a very small selection of the articles representing these themes.

(1) The most obvious consequence of the first conquests (which was the first phase of the expansion of the new Islamic state based in Medina) was that it totally transformed the political landscape of the Near East. The new empire that gradually emerged not only had borders different from those of the earlier Byzantine and Sasanian states, it also represented the rise to power in the region of a new ruling elite (mainly of Arabian origin) and the humbling of at least the upper echelons of the former Byzantine or Sasanian elites. Lower elements of the former ruling establishments, such as tax administrators, sometimes remained

<sup>13</sup> Michael Whitby, “Recruitment in Roman Armies from Justinian to Heraclius (ca. 565–615)”, in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, III: States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 61–124, esp. 119–24.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., Bousquet, “Observations”; Marius Canard, “L’expansion arabe: le problème militaire”, *L’Occident e l’Islam nell’Alto Medioevo*, I (Spoleto, 1965), 37–63. John W. Jandora, *The March from Medina: a Revisionist Study of the Arab Conquests* (Clifton, NJ: Kingston Press, 1990) emphasizes the military merits of the Muslim forces, whereas Bousquet and Canard deny that they had any advantage.

<sup>15</sup> Gustave von Grunebaum, “The First Expansion of Islam: Factors of Thrust and Containment”, *Diogenes* 53 (1966), 64–72.

<sup>16</sup> Christian Décobert, *Le mendiant et le combattant* (Paris: Seuil, 1991) pp. 57–66.

in place and simply worked for their new Arabian masters, but this phenomenon has generated some discussion of the relative importance of continuity and innovation in the early Islamic administration and of the pace of change.<sup>17</sup>

(2) Another consequence of the early conquests was demographic—in particular, the migration of large numbers of Arabians (whether settled people or nomadic pastoralists) from their home districts in Arabia to adjacent regions, especially in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. In some earlier studies of the expansion, as we have seen, this migration was considered a cause of the conquests, confusing the analysis of the causes of the conquests and of the nature of both the conquests (which were undertaken by organized armies, not by migrating tribes) and the migrations. The fact that these migrations followed the key conquests in Syria and Iraq, rather than preceded them, had already been pointed out early in the twentieth century by C.H. Becker,<sup>18</sup> but subsequent scholars sometimes continued to put the cart before the horse in this way (particularly those who continued to advance the idea that the conquests were merely the latest in a series of “Semitic migrations”). Unfortunately, relatively few scholars have tackled directly or comprehensively the question of these migrations that resulted from the first conquests, probably because we lack the kind of statistical evidence needed to draw a clear overall picture. A few studies of specific localities, relying on scattered anecdotes and the testimony of biographical dictionaries, give us some idea of the influx of migrants in particular localities that resulted from the conquests and the establishment of the first Islamic empire that followed,<sup>19</sup> but a comprehensive and thoughtful examination of this theme remains a *desideratum*.

(3) Economic changes of several kinds were clearly another important consequence of the conquests, but the analysis of economic history has remained confused. Of the various interpretations, only the Pirenne thesis and responses to it have received much attention from scholars, for example, in an essay by Andrew

<sup>17</sup> Above all, Michael G. Morony's magisterial *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), esp. Part I (27–164); the inadequacy of scholarship on administrative development is discussed by him on pp. 575–93. See also Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, *Studies in the Genesis and Early Development of the Caliphal Taxation System* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1988); M. Sprengling, “From Persian to Arabic”, *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 56 (1939), 175–224, 325–36; on the military, the first chapters of Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> C.H. Becker, “The Expansion of the Saracens—the East”, *Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 329–64.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 236–64; Hichem Djaït, “Les Yamanites à Kufa au Ier Siècle de l'Hégire”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 19 (1976), 148–81; F.M. Donner, “Tribal Settlement in Basra During the First Century A.H.”, in Tarif Khalidi (ed.), *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1984), 97–120; F.M. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 226–50 on migration and settlement in Iraq and Syria; Šālih al-ʿAlī, “Khiṭaṭ al-Baṣra”, *Sumer* 8 (1952), 72–83 and 281–302; Jamāl Jūda, *al-ʿArab wa l-ard̥ fi l-ʿIrāq fi l-qarn al-awwal al-hijri* (Amman: al-Sharika al-ʿarabiyya li-ṭibāʿa wa l-nashr, 1979).

S. Ehrenkreutz (Chapter 8).<sup>20</sup> To some extent, however, the Pirenne Thesis has distracted scholars from analyzing other aspects of the conquests' economic impact more closely. Among the other economic changes were shifts in the balance between sedentary and nomadic peoples, which affected everything from rural agriculture to urban life to overland commerce.<sup>21</sup> The conquest also resulted in a massive redistribution of wealth (some of it from churches?); wealth was now in the hands of groups that, in some cases, had hitherto had little of it (e.g., the Arabian soldiery), and resulted in the emergence of a new propertied elite (mostly Arabian townsmen in origin) that in time increasingly competed with or supplanted the older elites, some of whom fled or were dispossessed. None of these issues has been fully and properly studied to date, again partly because the requisite detail is scarce in the extant sources.

(4) The cultural impact of the first conquests and expansion were also significant; in some ways they were the most important and long-lasting of all consequences of the expansion. Foremost among these was, of course, the spread of Islam as a faith among new population groups, a process that continued for many centuries but that had its decisive origins in the conquests and the establishment of a new state directed by a self-consciously Islamic ruling elite. In the seventh century, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians constituted the overwhelming majority of the population of the Near Eastern and North African territories taken over by the Arabian conquerors, but the *amir al-mu'minīns* seem not to have considered the conversion of these non-Muslim communities a high priority. They did, however, strive to establish what we may loosely call an "Islamic order" in the territories they ruled, and over time this created the conditions under which significant numbers of non-Muslims came to embrace Islam. Numerous studies of the Islamization process have been undertaken, but all suffer from a dearth of detailed documentation for the processes involved and must rely, largely, on anecdotal and stray reports, and most lack a coherent methodological approach;<sup>22</sup> a noteworthy exception is Bulliet's book *Conversion to*

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, "Another Orientalist's Remarks concerning the Pirenne Thesis", *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 15 (1972), 94–104. Note especially the stimulating volume of Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>21</sup> See F.M. Donner, "The Role of Nomads in the Near East in Late Antiquity", in F.M. Clover and R.S. Humphreys (eds), *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 73–85; Walter Dostal, "The Significance of Semitic Nomads in Asia", *Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnological Sciences* 3 (1968), 312–16; A.H. Saleh, "Les bédouins d'Égypte aux premiers siècles de l'Hégire", *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 55 (1981), 137–61; Henri Terasse, "Citadins et Grands Nomades dans l'Histoire de l'Islam", *Studia Islamica* 29 (1969), 5–15; Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Arab Conquests and Agriculture: A Seventh-Century Apocalypse, Satellite Imagery, and Palynology", *Asian and African Studies* 19 (1985), 1–15.

<sup>22</sup> Laurence E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), is grounded in religious polemic and is thus quite unsatisfactory. Daniel C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950) discusses

*Islam in the Medieval Period*, which utilizes an ingenious, if highly speculative, method of extrapolation to estimate conversion trends in various provinces of the empire.<sup>23</sup>

(5) Another important cultural shift associated by many with the conquests was the process of Arabization, that is, the gradual spread of Arabic as the main language in everyday spoken use, at the expense of other languages of the Near East (Aramaic, Coptic, Berber, Greek, and so on), which gave ground. The degree to which this process was related to the conquests or expansion obviously depends on how large the Arabophone area was before the conquests; it is clear that Arabic was already becoming established as a spoken language in parts of Syria and Iraq before the appearance of Islam. The question of Arabization is also related to the emergence with Islam of Arabic as a literary language for the first time, first in the sacred text of the Qurʾān, then increasingly in use as an administrative language. This seems likely to have been a powerful stimulus to the use of spoken Arabic by populations that had not formerly spoken it, but this question remains to be properly explored.<sup>24</sup> The question of the rise of classical Arabic is a different one from the question of Arabization; it is also a highly complex one, but the formal or “classical” language emerged after the conquests and may plausibly be seen as one of the consequences of the expansion, which created the political and socio-cultural conditions in which the formal language was needed and could crystallize. Much remains to be explained about this process, however.<sup>25</sup>

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the tax consequences of conversion but does not address the conversion process itself. More helpful are some of the essays in M. Gervers and R.J. Bikhazi (eds), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990); Ira M. Lapidus, “The Conversion of Egypt to Islam”, *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 248–62; Farouk Omar, “The Islamization of the Gulf”, in C.E. Bosworth et al. (eds), *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989), 247–57; Michael Brett, “The spread of Islam in Egypt and North Africa”, in M. Brett (ed.), *Northern Africa: Islam and Modernization* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 1–12; M.A. Shaban, “Conversion to Early Islam”, in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (NY: Holmes and Meier, 1979), 24–29; Sam I. Gellens, “Egypt, Islamization of”, *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), vol. 3, 936–42.

<sup>23</sup> Richard W. Bulliett, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: an essay in quantitative history* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>24</sup> One of the few studies is A.N. Poliak, “L’Arabisation de l’Orient Semitique”, *Révue des Études Islamiques* 12 (1938), 35–63. See also Sidney Griffith, “From Aramaic to Arabic: The languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Period”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 11–31.

<sup>25</sup> A first serious effort to address these questions was Johann Fück, *‘Arabīya. Untersuchungen zur arabischen Sprach- und Stilgeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1950). The process is now being explored mainly in the context of the emergence of Qurʾānic language. The issue was raised in John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); see also Kees Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qurʾānic Exegesis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993).

(6) Another cultural question related to the first expansion of Islam is the reaction to it by non-Muslim populations; Walter E. Kaegi's essay on Byzantine Reactions was among the first to tackle this question (Chapter 9).<sup>26</sup> Also important to consider is the actual effect of the conquest on various non-Muslim communities; an essay by Stephen Gerö on Iranian Christians provides an interesting case study (Chapter 10).<sup>27</sup> Sometimes the change to Muslim rule was understood in symbolic terms (on which see below), and it is natural that the immediate reaction of the non-Muslim populations to the conquerors might differ from the attitudes of their descendants a generation or more later, yet all too often the evolution in such attitudes is not adequately considered.

(7) Finally, there is the need to see the first expansion of Islam in the context of a whole panoply of changes in society, institutions and ideologies of the Near East between about 500 and 800 CE, beyond those already mentioned. Some of these broad changes might be considered simultaneously "causes" and "consequences" of the expansion, or appear as symptoms of changes whose relationship to the rise of Islam is impossible to characterize simply. They include such things as the relationship between monotheism and a universalist, imperial conception of statecraft;<sup>28</sup> changing notions of piety and what constituted proper "public" and "private" behavior;<sup>29</sup> shifts in cultural identities;<sup>30</sup> and changes in the countryside and in the structure and functions of towns and cities, including (but not limited to) the phenomenon of the new Islamic *amṣār*.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Walter E. Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest", *Church History* 38 (1969), 139–49.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Gerö, "Only a change of masters? The Christians of Iran and the Muslim Conquest", *Studia Iranica* 5 (1987), 43–48. S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam", in Juynboll, *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 9–21.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> A classic treatment is Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150–750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).

<sup>30</sup> E.g., Averil Cameron, "The Eastern Provinces in the 7th Century AD: Hellenism and the Emergence of Islam", in Suzanne Said (ed.), *HELLENISMOS: Quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 25–27 octobre 1989* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 287–313.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Hugh Kennedy, "From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria", *Past and Present* 106 (February, 1985), 3–27; Yoram Tsafrir and Gideon Foerster, "From Scythopolis to Baysan—Changing Concepts of Urbanism", in Geoffrey King and Averil Cameron (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, 2: Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton: Darwin, 1994), 95–116; Donald Whitcomb, "The Miṣr of Ayla: settlement at al-'Aqaba in the Early Islamic Period", in King and Cameron, 155–70; idem, "Islam and the Socio-Cultural Transition of Palestine—Early Islamic Period (638–1099 CE)", in T.E. Levy (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London: Leicester University, 1995), 488–501.

## THE CONQUESTS AS SYMBOL OR SOURCE OF LEGITIMATION

Any comprehensive consideration of the expansion of Islam must take into account not only the debates over its causes, motivation, and direct consequences, but also the way such an epoch-making event was used retrospectively to articulate diverse ideas in later times. Three particular arenas are identified here.

One is the role of the Islamic conquests in later eschatological writings, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Later Muslims of an apocalyptic bent tended to see the conquests not only as evidence of God's favor and divine plan for the Islamic community, but as a portent of the impending Last Judgment; whereas Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian apocalyptic writers saw the conquests as evidence of Divine wrath, and looked forward to a coming reversal of their fortunes. Suliman Bashear's essay on apocalyptic tendencies in Islamic historiography of the conquests<sup>32</sup> can be contrasted with Bernard Lewis's study of a Jewish apocalyptic version of Islamic history (Chapter 11),<sup>33</sup> and both with essays on Christian or Zoroastrian apocalyptic writings that saw the conquests as some kind of marker of God's favor or disfavor.<sup>34</sup>

The conquests were also used in a second symbolic way—as a model for political inspiration among Muslims engaged, in later centuries, in military struggles against Christian enemies. At the time of the Crusades, for example, there appeared a number of “Pseudo-Wāqidi” works—that is, books attributed to the famous early historian al-Wāqidi—that offered completely spurious legends about events that supposedly took place during the first conquests. The purpose of this legendary literature was to inspire the Muslim community in its struggle with the Christian Franks by offering heroic tales about the earlier struggle against Christian Byzantium. This phenomenon was the subject of a key study by Rudi Paret (Chapter 12).<sup>35</sup>

Third, the reports about the conquests came to be collected (and perhaps fabricated) in later discussions among Muslims of the taxation policies of the state, and fed into the systematization of tax issues in Islamic legal thought. This is

<sup>32</sup> Suliman Bashear, “Apocalyptic and Other Materials on early Muslim-Byzantine Wars: a Review”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1991), 173–207.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Lewis, “An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1950), 305–38.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., G.J. Reinink, “Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam”, in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton: Darwin, 1992), 149–88; idem, “The Romance of Julian”, in Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Caquot-Rey (eds), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam* (Damascus: Institut Français d'Études Arabes, 1992), 75–86; Han J.W. Drijvers, “The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: A Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period”, in Cameron and Conrad, *op. cit.*, 189–214. Zoroastrian materials are reviewed in K. Czegledy, “Bahrām Chubīn and the Persian Apocalyptic Literature”, *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 8 (1958), 21–43.

<sup>35</sup> Rudi Paret, “Die Legendäre *Futūh*-Literatur”, in *La poesia epica e la sua formazione* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1970), 735–49.



because, in later Islamic law, the way an area was said to have been conquered or first brought under the rule of the Islamic state—whether by conquest (*anwatan*) or by force of arms (*ṣulḥan*)—determined the area’s later tax status. Albrecht Noth’s classic study of this question demonstrates some of the issue’s complexity (Chapter 13).<sup>36</sup>

### Revisionist Views of the Expansion

As with all other aspects of early Islamic history, our understanding of the first expansion of Islam depends on the reliability of the sources from which we try to reconstruct “what actually happened”. Pride of place was generally given to the thousands of narrative reports contained in the Arabic literary sources (chronicles, biographical dictionaries, etc.), most of which were compiled between a century and several centuries after the expansion. These belonged to the genre of *futūḥ* reports (accounts of the campaigns of conquest and related issues, such as treaty arrangements with various localities); others dealt more generally with the coalescence and evolution of the state. As noted above, most Western scholarship on the early expansion of Islam, from the nineteenth century and into the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, accepted in large measure the validity of the Islamic community’s narratives of this *futūḥ* tradition. They favored this literary material for two reasons. First, the amount of truly documentary information actually dating to the time of the expansion, especially to its first years, is vanishingly small—so a reconstruction of the course of the expansion from their testimony alone would be difficult and, in any case, highly incomplete. The second reason Western scholars long favored the Islamic narrative sources was because they provided the historian with a “ready-made” picture of what had happened that seemed plausible and fairly coherent.

Despite this generally positive view of the sources, there were occasional studies that called into question the sources’ reliability. The most important were works dealing with Islamic tradition and law by Ignaz Goldziher and, a generation later, Joseph Schacht.<sup>37</sup> One study that related directly to the conquests was a pioneering examination by Robert Brunschvig of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s work on the conquest of North Africa and Spain, which Brunschvig showed to have been so shaped by later juristic debates that its relationship to the actual events of the conquest was called into question (Chapter 14).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Albrecht Noth, “Zum Verhältnis von Kalifater Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in Umayyadischer Zeit. Die ‘Ṣulḥ’—“Anwa’-Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq”, *Die Welt des Islams* 14 (1973), 150–62.

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle: Max Niemayer, 1889–1890); Joseph Schacht, “A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1949), 143–54.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Brunschvig, “Ibn ‘Abdelhakam et la conquête de l’Afrique du Nord”, *Annales de l’Institut d’Études Orientales* (University of Algiers) 6 (1942–1947), 108–55. The essay by Noth cited in note 32, above, bears similar implications.

Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, however, a number of scholars began to raise fundamental challenges to the received picture of Islam's origins. Building on earlier critical studies by Goldziher, Schacht, and others, they contended that these sources could not in fact tell us even in general terms "what actually happened" during the period of the conquests, or even if they happened at all, much less lead us to satisfactory interpretations of those events. This view was first advanced in the writings of John Wansbrough,<sup>39</sup> and subsequently inspired works in a similar vein by others, including G.R. Hawting, Yehuda Nevo, and Moshe Sharon.<sup>40</sup> In their view, the Byzantine and Sasanian empires collapsed for internal reasons or, at any rate, somehow lost their grip over vast provinces in the Near East, in the aftermath of which Muslims rose to prominence and eventually emerged as rulers of the new empire; the new Muslim rulers then retrospectively created the myth of a divinely-aided "Islamic conquest" emanating from Arabia to explain and justify their rise to power. An essay by Sharon on "The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land" represents one effort of this kind (Chapter 15).<sup>41</sup> This revolutionary view of the Islamic conquests raises profound questions about how the Islamic community and a self-conscious Islamic identity managed to coalesce, and must be seen as part of the broader effort to revise our understanding of just how "Islam", as it came to be understood by about 150 AH, emerged.

Other studies focused closely on the historiographical shortcomings of the conquest narratives, but held back from complete rejection of the usual narrative of the events of the early Islamic era, including the conquests. The works of Albrecht Noth on conquest-historiography offered a sobering critique of the sources that challenged the reliability of many of their features (Chapter 16).<sup>42</sup> His work was inspired by the work of Biblical critics, particularly studies of the Deuteronomic history—a field to which Noth's own father, Martin Noth, had been a major contributor. Like the Biblical critics, however, Noth stopped short of rejecting the traditional sources as complete fabrications, insisting that if one

<sup>39</sup> Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies*; idem, *The Sectarial Milieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Wansbrough's prose is so dense that the neophyte is well-advised to begin with an explanation by one of his sympathizers, e.g. Andrew Rippin, "Literary Analysis of *Qur'ān*, *Tafsīr*, and *Sīra*: the Methodologies of John Wansbrough", in Richard Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 151–63.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., G.R. Hawting, "The Origins of the Muslim Sanctuary at Mecca", in G. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1982), 23–47; Y. Nevo and J. Koren, "The Origins of the Muslim Descriptions of the Jāhili Muslim Sanctuary", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (1990), 23–44; for Sharon, see the next note.

<sup>41</sup> Moshe Sharon, "The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land", in M. Sharon (ed.), *Pillars of Smoke and Fire: the Holy Land in History and Thought* (Johannesburg: Southern, 1988), 225–35.

<sup>42</sup> Albrecht Noth, "İsfahān-Nihāvand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 118 (1968), 274–96. See also Albrecht Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen, und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität, 1993); idem, "Futūḥ-History and Futūḥ-Historiography: the Muslim Conquest of Damascus", *Al-Qanṭara* 10 (1989), 453–62.

painstakingly identified and set aside the elaborations and manipulations of generations of transmitters one could eventually lay bare a kernel that went back to early times and provided the modern historian with sound historical information. Lawrence Conrad, inspired by Noth's work, demonstrated that the narratives about the conquest of Arwād are marked by discontinuity, instability, and luxuriant literary elaboration and must be considered, essentially, fiction,<sup>43</sup> but nonetheless has not voiced the opinion that the conquests never occurred.

Other revisionist authors also took a nuanced position—recognizing the difficulties posed by the sources, but contending that somehow an historical reconstruction could be achieved. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, for example, in their epoch-making book *Hagarism* (which really established the need to take revisionist views seriously and hence set the historical agenda for scholarship on early Islam for the next generation) accepted that the movement began in Arabia and that the conquests happened, but drew on earlier critiques of the sources (including those of Noth and others) to challenge prevailing notions of what the nature of the expansion was; in their view, it was an amalgam of messianic fervor of Jews exiled from Edessa by the Byzantines and latent “nativist” feeling among west-Arabbians.<sup>44</sup> More recently, it has been suggested that, even if the expansion did follow the general outlines laid out in the Muslim *futūḥ* narratives, the *futūḥ* genre tended to overemphasize the military aspects of the expansion, responding both to the desire of the conqueror's descendants to show their ancestors as heroic, and to a theological desire to demonstrate that the military victories were achieved against overwhelming odds and hence were signs of God's favor for the nascent community.<sup>45</sup> This opens up the possibility that the original expansion of the Believers' movement may have been far less violent and more a question of accommodation than usually supposed, in keeping with a view that the movement was originally a tendency to monotheistic reform that may have been broadly acceptable to, and accepting of, many Christians and Jews.

These issues—both regarding the historicity of the early sources, and regarding the nature of the conquest or expansion itself—are still matters of active debate, but it seems that total rejection of the Islamic sources, and of the notion of a conquest with some centralized impetus, is probably too extreme a

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<sup>43</sup> Lawrence I. Conrad, “The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East”, in Cameron and Conrad (eds), *op. cit.*, 317–401. Its length precludes its inclusion here.

<sup>44</sup> Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). While *Hagarism* largely sidesteps the Islamic narrative sources as evidence, Crone's later works show a greater willingness to wrestle with these sources to win some information; see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses*; eadem, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> See F.M. Donner, “Islamic Conquests”, in Youssef Choueiri (ed.) *Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwells, 2005), 28–51.

judgment (Chapter 17).<sup>46</sup> For one thing, some recent work, such as Chase F. Robinson's essay on the conquest of Khūzistān, shows that aspects of the traditional Islamic conquest narratives are confirmed by documentary evidence or by the testimony of non-Muslim sources of early date (Chapter 18).<sup>47</sup> In general, the revisionist scholarship of the past four decades has underlined the need to attain a fuller understanding of the historiographical complexities of the Islamic sources for the conquest and for early Islamic history generally. It has also led to a greater interest in exploring the testimony of the non-Islamic (often non-Arabic) sources on the early expansion. An excellent example is Sebastian Brock's article on how Islam first appears to Syriac authors (Chapter 19).<sup>48</sup> The non-Islamic sources are of value not because they are automatically to be considered superior to the Islamic ones, for they have their own deficiencies,<sup>49</sup> but simply because they offer us additional information and alternative perspectives that may prove valuable to us as historians. Working patiently on the basis of a careful analysis of all the available sources, both Islamic and non-Islamic, documentary and literary, scholars should gradually be able to construct a comprehensive and historically convincing picture of Islam's first expansion.

<sup>46</sup> See F.M. Donner, "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests", in Averil Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, III: States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton: Darwin, 1995), 337–60.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Chase F. Robinson, "The Conquest of Khūzistān: a Historiographical Reassessment", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67 (2004), 14–39.

<sup>48</sup> S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam", in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 9–21. See also the essay by Kaegi cited in note 26 above. The most comprehensive effort of this kind is Robert Hoyland's invaluable *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin, 1997).

<sup>49</sup> This point is stressed by Conrad, "Conquest of Arwād", esp. 399–401.



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*Note.* No bibliography on the subject of this volume could claim to be exhaustive, given the thousands of relevant works that exist in dozens of languages. The following bibliography lists items the volume editor deems significant as major works or representative contributions to one of the sub-themes covered in the volume. Entries have been subdivided by major subthemes: I. General; II. Origins—Causes—Early Phases; III. Conquest of Specific Regions; IV. Consequences; V. Symbolic Views; VI. Historiographical Studies. Recent revisionist works have been integrated with other themes, mainly under sections I and VI. Clearly, some works are germane to several sub-themes; they have been placed where they seem to the editor most relevant, but such classifications are always somewhat debatable.

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**THE ART OF WAR OF THE ARABS,  
AND THE SUPPOSED RELIGIOUS FERVOUR  
OF THE ARAB CONQUERORS**

*Leone Caetani*

**Military Art of the Arabs**

After this brief and incomplete description of the Muslims' weapons and the means of attack and defence of which they disposed at the time when they crossed the frontiers of their peninsula, it is time to say something on the subject of strategy and the art of fighting among the Ancient Arabs. Nobody can deny that, in this respect, they were – at least theoretically – vastly inferior compared to the Greek and Sassanid armies, who had had renowned schools of the art of war, legacy of all the ancient civilisations of Asia and of Roman military power. The art of moving great crowds of men on the battlefield, like the pieces on a chessboard, was studied widely and furnished with the immeasurable store of experience gained during the secular wars of which Syria and the valley of Tigris and of Euphrates had been the favourite battleground.

Among the Arabs, secluded as they were in their inaccessible deserts, the complex and risky art of leading armed men on a battlefield and of achieving victory was still in its infancy, and there can be no comparison whatsoever between the lack of military skill among the Arabs and the knowledge of their formidable adversaries. It might be said that there was no military knowledge at all among the Arabs, for the simple reason that there had never been an army in Arabia for as long as anyone could remember. It is true that everyone was a warrior: at the moment of danger, all the adults took up arms, in particular when it was a case of defending their own possessions against raids from neighbours. The character of the Arabs was so warlike that no-one shirked this obligation; the men were living in the desert armed, so to speak, night and day, and they all shared [356] an unquenchable thirst for fame and booty. Their innate passion for fighting found a further, particular incentive when the danger of losing their possessions appeared suddenly, or when it was necessary to avenge a crime, a murdered kinsman or to recover one's own belongings.

What was lacking, however, was any concept of military organisation as we understand it: that is to say that there was nothing besides a moral obligation,



created by custom and tradition, to take up arms when the need arose and to fight with one's own clan or tribe; never did an Arab fight because of an order he received. His participation was always and only ever voluntary: no-one could prevent him from staying at home if he did not have the inclination or the courage to fight. Everyone feared only one thing: the scorn of his companions or the satire of the poet, which would immortalise the memory of his baseness forever.

Thus the hosts of armed men which gathered in every group of families had no real organic formation, as they consisted of volunteers linked only by blood ties and shared interests. We must take into account that the major part of the Arabian peninsula was inhabited by these tribes, all of which were independent units, without any kind of bond among them. Then it becomes understandable how it could be that not only there was no military art in ancient Arabia (among the nomads), but also that it could never emerge unless the political situation of perennial anarchy came to an end. We do know, it is true, of tribal confederations that were formed by means of the ancient tie of the '*hilf*', or oath, but one could not really count on the practical value of these unions. The obligations imposed by similar agreements were quite flexible, and if the majority of a certain tribe did not consider it in their interest to stand by their obligations, they would neglect them with Arab fickleness and faithlessness.

[357] Under these circumstances, we cannot speak of real armies in pre-Islamic Arabia, nor of any military art. At most, we may speak of a warlike and martial tradition, which was created by the natural environment and the primitive character of relations between the individual tribes. On occasion, in truly exceptional instances, a formation might emerge which we could call an army, such as the confederates of the Quraysh who moved to besiege Medina in 5 AH and who were said to number as many as ten thousand men. However, it was still only a group of volunteers, a jumble of unconnected units which were clearly distinguishable among themselves and were completely free from any kind of cohesion. All of the units fought in their own way, went to fight where they pleased and even – as we can see from the traditions concerning this very siege of Medina – stopped fighting when and where they pleased.

At a certain point, each of these independent units, without waiting for an order from above, folded its tents, picked up its baggage and left, without giving the slightest thought to the others. Uniting these forces was a most arduous and delicate enterprise because of the incredible touchiness, the eternal jealousies, the immense pride and the fickleness of all these warriors who refused to acknowledge any kind of authority or discipline, and whom

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one careless word could in one moment cause to flare up with rage. Within such precarious unions, no-one could give orders: every single decision had to be taken in the assembly of the chiefs where the resolutions of the majority did not restrict the freedom of the minority. Furthermore, each chief then had to hold a meeting with his kin and speak to convince them before he could obtain support for the resolutions of the larger council. Muhammad himself, although he succeeded in concentrating in his hands the power over his followers, was unable to break this ancient custom and it frequently took him a long time to impose his will. The independence [358] of the individual units, including those who were linked by close ties of blood rather than opportunistic agreements of *tahāluf*, or sworn confederation, is demonstrated by many events during the Prophet's military campaigns.

We might feel compelled to wonder whether, considering the circumstances, there was not some kind of science of war in Arabia, since, despite the continual fratricidal conflicts, real battles between large groups of armed men were always the exception? It is true that we have, in the traditions about pagan Arabia, instances of historic battles fought between large groups of tribes, the so-called 'days of the people' or *ayyām al-nās*. Several Arab writers give us more than just a little information about these; however, it is imperative that we mistrust the literal contents of these narratives, as they were compiled by later traditionists who were not aware of the true conditions in ancient Arabia. With the exception of very rare instances, the 'battles' were merely skirmishes, reckless brawls, during which no precise organisation was observed and which were really only clashes between small groups, or else single combat between individual warriors.

In general all fights started as surprise attacks: one tribe would swoop down unexpectedly on an enemy camp, massacre the men who were unable to escape, sometimes also raging against women with bloodcurdling ferocity, and finally abducting the most beautiful girls and women, the children and the livestock. Now the decimated tribe would appeal to its blood kin and its allies and, having received assistance, use the first favourable opportunity to swoop in its turn onto a camp of the enemies in exactly the same way, taking ferocious revenge for the harm suffered; if possible, increasing the dose.

The same way of waging war still survives in Arabia, and we may read lively descriptions in the pages of Doughty, Dissard, and Jaussen, where we might believe we were looking at scenes from the days of the Jāhiliyya, or Age of [359] Barbarity, as the pre-Islamic history of Arabia was later called. We read of surprise attacks on nomads' camps, single combat, women slashed and killed by lance blows after having seen their children die before their own

eyes; all those horrors of barbarity, in fact, to which Muhammad sought to put an end, albeit in his own way. Despite the Prophet's orders, some women were even slain at Hunayn 'and people came running to gape at their bodies!'.<sup>1</sup> And the culprits were not even punished.

The Prophet attempted to put an end to this state of things and, although he himself was not a natural warrior, without doubt made far-reaching changes which survived long after his death. Muhammad was no general, nor was he enamoured of things military; we even know that, when it was possible, he preferred to stay safely behind the lines of his men. It is a strange fact indeed that the founder of one of the most powerful military theocracies of all times was himself not a warrior; but that is how it was, for Muhammad always saw war as a means to achieving an end, never as an end in itself.

[360] Still, there is no doubt that, during the Medinan period, this marvellous seducer of men, in order to achieve his ends, devoted much more effort to founding a strong military and social order among his followers, and to inculcate discipline and obedience, than to developing and perfecting the moral and religious aspects of his doctrine. In that respect, his activities marked a great progress in the art of warfare among the Arabs.

By the time of his death, the tribes that remained faithful to the new religion had become accustomed to the military organisation and showed themselves more willing to follow the command of one man than they ever had in the past. While they were still divided into groups according to real or imagined ties of blood and followed their own chiefs, they had by then become accustomed to recognise the authority of even a foreign leader, and they were resigned to respecting and obeying the disciplinary orders of the generals

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<sup>1</sup> The bloody torturing of unarmed women, one of the most grim and horrific aspect of ancient Arab society, was in fact very common. The custom remained in use for a long time, and the bloodcurdling reports about the war between the *Christian* (!) Taghlib in Mesopotamia towards the end of the first century AH, during which either side habitually eviscerated every pregnant woman, are enough to make any reader shudder. I regret to say that the custom persists to this day in Arabia, and those looking for proof should read what Doughty writes about the wars between the Anayzāh and the Qahtan. Among all these horrors a more amusing incident narrated by the same author is worth mentioning, because it is proof of how the hard and dangerous life of the desert sharpens the intelligence and schools the spirit to find an ingenious and immediate way out, where the softer city dweller might submit like a lamb to the slaughter. When the Arabs attacked the camp, one woman wishing to save her absent husband's savings, grabbed a goatskin filled with water, dropped all her husband's precious metals inside, closed it and, having torn her clothes off, began to scream and fled into the desert, the goatskin on her shoulders. The enemies noticed her, some wanted to go after her, but then thought that she must have been reduced to this state by the attacks of others of their number and let her pass with her goatskin in order that she should not die of thirst in the desert.

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appointed by the Prophet. The triumph of the Medinan theocracy over the divided tribes of central Arabia after Muhammad's death, in the years 11 and 12 AH, was made possible by this strong and close-knit first community, which furthermore paved the way for the great conquests. It was thanks to this group that finally it became clear to all the Arabs that the advantages of Islam offered ample compensation for the odious taxation and ritual demanded by the new faith – although, in truth, at the beginning these were hardly more than nominal. The most unwilling tribes bowed their heads, and now the warlike virtues as well as the extraordinary intelligence of this people so richly endowed by nature were all united in one single body, all driven towards a common aim, and showed themselves to possess a force so surprising as to stun the world.

Beyond the consciousness of a unity superior to the ties of mere consanguinity, beyond getting into the habit of the duties of discipline and obedience to a leader, which other innovations, [361] which improvements in military science may we attribute to the Prophet, that could explain to us the long series of great victories over the experienced veterans that were Byzantium and Persia?

The answer is not easy, due to the lack of precise information. Even if the Prophet had not improved the customs of war in any way, we could say that, only by means of the unanimous union of so many forces and the teaching of discipline, he had already forged a weapon out of the Arab anarchy; a weapon which, even without further improvement, must be formidable and maybe even invincible within the borders of the peninsula. But he most certainly did more than this, and introduced several military innovations which marked genuine progress in the art of fighting. These, however, were innovations which had little intrinsic value when it came to campaigning against the war-hardened armies of Byzantium and Persia. The Arabs of the Hijāz were utterly ignorant of the art of attacking and storming fortresses; all their warlike bravery was blunted and gave way before the sheer resistance of walls and trenches.

Despite the small innovations introduced by Muhammad, theoretically the art of warfare among the Arabs was still, compared to that of Greeks and Persians, in a position of great inferiority. There are several European historians, such as Muir, who, although aware of this, endeavoured to find a reason for the Arab victories and glorified some of the generals such as Khālid b. al-Walīd, Companion of the Prophet, elevated him among the greatest generals in all history and declared him the main author of the Muslim conquests. This explanation is not correct. Khālid *became* a famous general,

and his own great courage, his rich and audacious initiative and ingenuity made him, it is true, the best and most capable strategist of primitive Islam, but we really need not pursue this any further. [362] It is certain only that his unique talent and his untiring energy contributed very much to the triumph of the Arab armies in Syria; but the great pitched battles won in Babylonia as well as the conquest of Iran and Egypt were fortunately led by others. The Arab victories were due to very complex reasons, which we will now try to present briefly, investigating the martial and moral virtues of the ancient Arabs, virtues which carried the day even in battles which were not commanded by men of genius.

Arab military art was of a patriarchal and primitive character, as is also made clear from certain features in the nomads' way of fighting. One, for instance, was the custom of single combat among warriors, which recalls the most famous passages of the *Iliad* and of other ancient national epic poems, and which shows how little unified battle action there was in those days. Furthermore, we must not think that these encounters took place while the two armies stood facing each other on the brink of battle. This is probably a mistake of the traditionists of later centuries who did not know how the ancient Arabs fought. We must, indeed, remember that the opposing armies of the Arabs did not have regular organisation on either side, but that they were divided into small groups rushing to and fro in the greatest possible disorder, now launching themselves onto a handful of men if they thought they had the advantage during an attack, now quickly avoiding confrontation if the position or the time did not seem auspicious. Thus it happened that when a warrior from the one side saw an enemy, he would challenge him to single combat while the friends of either would halt their own, often rash movements in order to watch the spectacle. Muhammad's victories are certainly due to the measures he took to put an end to such primitive ways of fighting, and the Arabs were not slow to discover the advantages of the new system, especially when they [363] crashed into the closed phalanxes of the Greeks and Persians. As we follow the military history of the Muslims we find fewer and fewer mentions of single combat, until they finally disappear altogether, once the Muslims had embraced, and maybe in some cases even improved, the military technique of their enemies.

Another Barbaric characteristic of the early Arab wars was the warriors' custom of taking more or less their whole family with them. After careful study this custom, which at first seems surprising, will prove to be much less unreasonable than it appeared at first. On the contrary, it will be seen to be based on reasons similar to those that caused Germanic Barbarians to invade the Roman Empire carrying with them most of their possessions. Indeed,

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there are many similarities between the Barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire and the Arabs' invasions of the crumbling empires of Asia, but this is not the place to linger on this subject.

Now, we must bear in mind that in Arabia all adult males were warriors. If an expedition promised victory and rich booty, they all went; if the duration of the enterprise was uncertain, and if it involved travelling to a faraway country, it was not possible to leave family and livestock without protection in the boundless solitude of the desert where a handful of evildoers could wreak havoc with impunity, and then disappear.

Thus the Arab custom of going on their great expeditions in the company of their families and livestock was more than just a custom, it was a necessity. The Muslims maintained this custom, although one should have thought that the law of Islam would have guaranteed the safety of women left at home. During the battle of Yarmūk the Arab camp was full of the warriors' women who inspired their husbands to fight when the Greek phalanxes threatened to overrun the tents. Before the battle of al-Qādisiyya, women and children were left in Khaffān on the edge of the [364] desert, in a place that would be safe even in case of defeat. At the battle of Marj al-Suffār, Sa'īd Ibn al-Āṣ's new wife, still covered with the perfumed ointments which women put on their faces during the first night of marriage, fought the Greeks brandishing a tent pole.

It is likely that this degree of precaution had become a habit with the Arabs, and that another reason for having their women follow them was to enjoy their company and to have someone to look after the wounded or in times of disease. The women probably also attended to cooking food, mended their husbands' torn garments, looked after property left in the camp, repaired goatskins, and so on. In Syria, many generals had their wives with them and even contracted marriages on the eve of the great battles – thus was their zest for life! The Prophet also followed this pleasant custom, and took one or more of his wives with him on most of his campaigns. When he went on the Farewell Pilgrimage, he took all nine of his wives.

**Assumed Religious Fervour of the Conquering Arabs**

To sum up the above remarks, we must needs conclude that as regards weapons and strategy, the Arabs found themselves in a position that was quite obviously inferior. If the outcome of the wars to come had depended exclusively on the strength of their weapons and the strategic knowledge of their leaders, the Greeks and Persians would have been certain of forcing

their new enemy back to his desert homeland. In the same way the Roman legions, for more than two centuries, successfully drove the barbarians of the North back into their native forests in central Europe. Even when the Roman armies did not command powerful weapons, steadfast discipline nor skilful generals, they still continued to meet the barbarians with fierce resistance, and [365] it took another two and a half centuries until the last remaining vestiges of the Roman Empire had been obliterated in Europe. Compared to the Greeks and Persians, the Arabs were in a way like the barbarians compared to the Western Empire; so now, before we tell the story of the genesis of Islam and its first great triumphs, it is our duty to explain how it was possible that the work of the Arabs, which was destructive and creative at one and the same time, could have been so much faster, more complete and more enduring than that of the Western barbarians, despite the military inferiority alluded to just now.

In another chapter, when we tell the story of the great conquests, we will discuss the pitiful conditions in which the Byzantine and the Sassanid Empires found themselves, and describe the extremes of misery, powerlessness and decay into which they had sunk. Here, however, we will determine how the Arabs could be morally and physically so superior to their opponents. Indeed, the Arabs were able to defeat their enemies on the battlefield and to change forever their civilisation, faith, language and nearly all the ancient traditions in the Middle East.

Muslim historians evaded studying this question, believing that it was more than enough to propose as explanation some vague and general idea, and finding justification for everything within the religious fervour of the newly converted Muslims. If we believe these historians, the Arabs launched themselves onto the Asian provinces in order to fulfil the command of the deceased Prophet of converting the whole world to the new faith. These historians believed that they must consider these victories to have been due, above all, to the virtue of religious passion which impelled these fanatics boldly to disregard death, and made their furious attacks on the battlefield completely irresistible. This idea is based on an accumulation of errors, which it will be our task to refute in the course of the present studies. Meanwhile, it will be conducive to our understanding of what follows to set out in brief the reasons why the ancient idea [366] of the Arabs' religious fervour at the time of the great conquests is, in our view, fundamentally wrong. For the time being we shall state our conclusions; a more detailed discussion will be undertaken in the later chapters.

In the following chapter we will first of all and in detail show the true religion of ancient, nomadic Arabia, as well as the true nature of religious

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feeling among the inhabitants of the desert. Our discussion will conclude by showing that there was no religious fervour whatsoever in the souls of the vast majority of the Arabs who achieved the conquests, and that on the whole their religion was merely coarse satisfaction of the senses.

Secondly, Muhammad's preaching did not kindle true religious feelings except in a small number of people, and although the Islamic movement he led was begun as a religious reform, it soon degenerated into an essentially political movement. Ritual and financial requirements of the new faith were light enough in themselves, and while they were fulfilled only very imperfectly, during the Prophet's lifetime they constituted a kind of political discipline beneath which no truly religious passion lay hidden. Indeed, except for a few tribes, the peoples of the desert wanted to emancipate themselves from any Islamic duty as soon as the Prophet departed this life. Muhammad's domain was made up of tribes which were mostly subjected by force, and only to a small extent by considerations of interest or opportunity. These tribes were without any kind of religious fervour, and due to their innate indifference to all forms of religion they were entirely untouched by that blinding emotion we call *fanaticism*. Historians describe the Bedouins who defeated the Greeks and Persians as fanatics who flung themselves into the arms of death for the sake of their faith, but these historians are ascribing to the seventh century, and to the Arab people, sentiments which were characteristic of *non-Arab* nations in much more recent times. Alternatively, they are thus depicting the Arabs as [367] mediaeval authors and theologians imagined the early Muslims to have been. These writers appear to be ignorant of the fact that the Arab armies sent out to conquer Asia were made up nearly completely of volunteers from tribes cruelly subjected to the Caliph's will by force of arms in pitched battles. These men, who had only a few months earlier been rebels against Islam simply could not have become fanatic advocates of the new faith. They were, as Döllinger already said so well, simple raiders, greedy for plunder and unbridled licence, men who were only too ready to associate as brothers and colleagues with the enemies of the day before, as soon as the latter had declared themselves willing to take some companions to loot the civilised world beyond their own borders.

At Muhammad's death, there were indeed some among the Muslims who, whether from genuine religious feeling or from blind enthusiasm for the Prophet, their beloved master, professed an ardent faith and showed particular zeal in fulfilling their duties as the true faithful. However, they were only a negligible minority and, furthermore, they all belonged to the class of the oldest and most reliable Companions who had stayed in Medina until the end of the first great conquests. Very few among them fought in Syria



and Persia; the great majority of the warriors was made up of Bedouin adventurers, the same Bedouins who knew nothing of Islam beyond its name, and who appreciated only the material advantages it gave them.

A further point, no less worthy of note, must be added to the three previous, fundamental ones.

If we were to look in the Koran for an exhortation to die for the faith, we would look in vain. Muhammad promises the faithful a generous reward in the afterlife: charming untouched maidens who, after each intercourse, return to being virgins as before; delicious drink, enchanting gardens, soft fruit and eternal joy. This reward, however, was promised in exchange for services rendered to Islam and the Prophet, alive. The idea of martyrdom, of dying for one's faith, [368] was a highly Christian concept and seeped into Muslim consciousness afterwards, as hundreds of Muslims were, in fact, apostate Christians. If Muhammad had asked the Bedouin to sacrifice their life, these sceptics would have laughed in his face as if he were joking, however much he promised them paradise. Looking at the tragic corpses of some of his men who had been slain, the Prophet emphasised the rewards that were the right of these generous men. He would not, however, have dreamed of requesting his men to die: the warriors from Arabia burst into Asia like wild beasts, intent on abducting and enjoying, but by no means intending to die. They would have considered it the height of stupidity to give up these certain and much desired advantages in favour of a vague and uncertain promise, a promise upon the truth of which nobody could, or indeed wanted to, depend.

The true reasons for the violence with which the Arabs burst forth from the confines of the parched desert were practical and material ones, to a large part due to the deep economic misery, the last result, that is to say, of the impoverishment of which we have spoken in the preceding chapter. I am hoping that the arguments collected there have proved sufficiently that the Arabs were compelled by very urgent and pressing motives when they invaded Persia and Byzantium at one and the same time. They were troubled by a most profound and painful mental tension which required fast and extensive satisfaction; they were, in short, driven by hunger and misery, by the desperate necessity of escaping from the fiery prison of the desert which could no longer sustain them. It was this need to leave their homeland that made them fight at one and the same time on all frontiers, with a centrifugal, or I might say convulsive, motion, which no human endeavour could have stopped and which can only be compared to an irresistible force of nature.

What we must not look for in this movement is a religious impulse of any kind, any more or less than we may seek [369] religious motives in the invasions of the Germanic hordes who crossed the borders of the Roman

Empire, or in the Tartar invasions which inundated Asia in the 13th century. The Arabs achieved their conquests only with material means and the moral virtues innate in their character; and Islam had nothing to do with these. We will have to describe and analyse in much detail the concatenation of circumstances by which Islam became the temporary and necessary force which compelled the Arab atoms, almost despite themselves, to fuse together into one single organism. During this very brief period Islam fulfilled the function of the mortar which binds the bricks and stones of a building together and makes it possible to build walls and vaults, but which at the same time does not change the essential character of the materials which it unites to form the fabric. If the mortar disintegrates, the building crumbles and the bricks and stones return to being the formless piles they were before construction. In the same way, only a few decades after the end of the conquests, Arabia returned to being what she had been before, picked up the threads of her ordinary life, similar to the ancestral pagan life, not least as the tribes remaining in Arabia could make free of their native pastures and live in greater comfort than before because of the great drain of emigration.

Now let us turn to the true reasons for Arab superiority, which can be classed in two categories: one is the sheer number of armed men who made up the conquering armies, the other must include the moral qualities of the Arab race.

### **Total Number of the Arab Forces who Achieved the Conquests**

This particular argument requires a short examination, as it is necessary to correct an erroneous idea which has spoiled nearly all the histories of the Arab conquests. [370] In their explanations of the disastrous defeats suffered by the Imperial armies, Byzantine historians never even hint at religious fervour among the Arabs; their main argument to justify everything that happened is that the Arabs arrived in innumerable crowds. Theophanes, for instance, speaks of *plēthos apeiron*.<sup>2</sup> Armies were counted in hundreds of thousands, the dead in tens of thousands. Muslim writers, who all love hyperbole, in turn give

<sup>2</sup> Two lines further along, Theophanes adds that Baānes wrote to the Sacellarius asking for help *dia to plēthos einai tous Arabas* (Theophanes, ed. de Boor, I, 337, ll. 25–27). It may be permissible to infer from these two vague hints that in many cases the Arabs were not only bolder but also *more numerous than the Greeks*. It seems to me that such a deduction is justified by what we know of the state of the Byzantine military and of the ease and magnitude of the Arab victories. Until now it has always been believed that, as Arab sources suggest, the Greeks were more numerous than the Arabs; I, however, would be inclined to the opposite opinion.

huge numbers of armed men and dead. Their aim was to glorify Islam, to make it appear like a global cataclysm, and in order to achieve this result, any means was fair: the Greeks were counted as one or two hundred thousand men, with their dead in proportion, in order that the numbers might give a precise idea of the dreadful defeat inflicted on the enemy.

However, having increased the numbers of the enemies to such an extent, a historian then had to increase the numbers of the Muslims as well, in order to avoid being accused of lying. Quoting a huge number for the armies of Islam had its advantages, as it would allow to show the whole of Arabia as converted and taking part in the triumph. The larger part of the figures relating to the warriors, which can be found in the traditions on the subject of the conquests, are the product of similar flights of fantasy. Among European historians we find a tendency to accept Muslim data concerning the numbers of victorious Arabs at Ajnadayn and al-Yarmūk; indeed, even the gifted and conscientious de Goeje bases some of his arguments on these figures, [371] thus showing his acceptance of them as authentic and certain. In general, the opinion in the West has been that only the number of Greek warriors and dead had been exaggerated.

However, studying the argument impartially has convinced us that Byzantine chroniclers as well as Muslim traditionists did indeed, and for similar reasons, exaggerate all the numbers, those of the Greeks as much as those of the Arabs, and with more than oriental lavishness.

The Arab armies, which were first to invade Syria, were much less numerous than was thought until now, and the figures given in certain sources (not by any means the best) are all much exaggerated. There are no precise arguments which would allow us to state with certainty the number of invaders into Syria, but we are probably not very far from the truth in asserting that fewer than ten thousand men began the campaign in Syria, and that the 27,000 (which may well be also exaggerated) we find in the sources refers to the *total* number of Muslim warriors at the end of the three-year campaign, 12–15 AH, *after* the arrival of all the reinforcements from Medina.

I believe, however, that at the same time we must consider that the enemy forces of Greeks and Sassanids were also fairly paltry, and in some cases possibly even smaller than the Arab armies. The wonderful consequences of these victories fired the imagination of the chroniclers, all of whom, Muslim or Byzantine, wallowed in fantastic calculations. The ones were hoping to excuse their defeats, the others intending to glorify Islam, and both sides ended up exaggerating everything, the courage of the victors, the resistance of the enemy, the numbers of the men who fought, and those who died.

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To conclude, the armies employed on both sides were, so to speak, paltry, and as far as numbers went, not so different. The true superiority of the Arabs lay in other factors, mostly moral, which we shall now study with great attention as they are rather complex and not very easy to determine.



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## 2

# SOME CRITICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL REMARKS ON THE ARAB CONQUEST AND THE THEORIES PROPOSED ON THIS

G.H. Bousquet

[52]

### I

There is something extraordinary about the Arab conquest which has always fascinated me. In world history, there are certainly examples to be found of large-scale conquests: some have been slow, others rapid but then short-lived: such conquests have left durable traces among the vanquished, but this has depended on the possession, by the victor, of a sophisticated level of civilisation, superior to that of the vanquished. None of these factors apply in our case: the rapidity of the Arab conquest, the inferior level of civilisation on the part of the victor, the durability of the new institutions imposed on the vanquished – all of this makes the conquest in question an event, I believe, *sui generis*.

For a long time, scholars showed no inclination to study the phenomenon scientifically.<sup>2</sup> The theory, if theory it could be called – was that the Muslim warriors hurled themselves upon their neighbours, “the Qur’ān in one hand and a sword in the other” and in short, the conquests were the product of religious fanaticism.<sup>3</sup>

[53] At the end of the Nineteenth Century, and during the years that followed, various academics have turned their attention to the question, intent on refuting the notion that the Arab conquest had a religious aspect.

It was Arnold who was the first to argue, in *The Preaching of Islam* (first edition, 1896), that the Arabs did not seek to convert the Christians in Egypt,

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the abridged version of a lecture delivered on 30 March 1955 at the “Istituto per l’Oriente” in Rome.

<sup>2</sup> If I am not mistaken, this applies to the two founders of Islamology: Goldziher and Snouck-Hurgronje.

<sup>3</sup> This thesis is even to be found, in vignette form, on the frontispiece of *Tableau de l’Empire Ottoman* by the venerable Mouradjea d’Ohsson (1788 edition). Nobody has ever observed that this thesis is islamologically or tactically inadmissible: the Qur’ān cannot be carried with the left hand, and military tradition tends to recommend that the sword be held with the right hand!

in Syria, etc. and who, later, associated himself with Caetani's thesis, which accorded with his own. In Arnold's work there is, in my opinion, a most erroneous notion, which was later to be taken up by Schumpeter, or developed independently by him: that a military conquest cannot be explained in terms of religious fanaticism when the victor does not try to impose his faith on the vanquished; it is true on the one hand that the facts presented by Arnold are accurate,<sup>4</sup> and on the other that those who, like me, believe that a conquest can have a religious character without the manifestation of missionary zeal, bear the onus of proof, proof which I confine myself to presenting elsewhere.

Subsequently, in 1901, it was H. Winckler who, in a book noted for its peculiar typographical arrangement, *Arabisch, Orientalisch, Semitisch*, stated emphatically that it was appropriate to consider the Arab conquest as the last of the great Semitic emigration movements from the Arabian peninsula, this land having long been in decline.

Some years later, Caetani (*Annali dell'Islam*, vol. II), the best known of the authors whom I consider here, took up and developed Winckler's idea. This is the familiar thesis of *inaridimento*: the progressive desiccation of Arabia over the millennia drove the Semites in general, and in particular the Arabs of the seventh century, to conquer more fertile regions where [54] they were less likely to starve to death.<sup>5</sup> This thesis has been accepted by numerous authors.<sup>6</sup> The negative idea at the basis of this theory, i.e. that the conquest did not have a religious character, recurs in a fairly short but magisterial article by C.H. Becker (in *Der Islam*, 1910, n° 1), in my opinion the most interesting and profound of the articles owed to orientalist.

It was in fact someone still quite unrecognised in orientalist circles, an Austrian economist and, to my mind, the greatest of his time, my teacher and friend, Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) – who published in 1919, in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft*, one of the very few sociological studies which he wrote:

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<sup>4</sup> Other cases could be cited here. For example, I have found in de Goeje (*Mém. sur la conquête de la Syrie*, 2nd ed. p. 106) this declaration by a Nestorian bishop, 15 years after the conquest: "The Arabs do not fight against the Christian religion, but rather they protect our faith: they respect our priests and our holy men, and make donations to our churches and our convents."

<sup>5</sup> It may be said in passing, why has no one ever drawn attention to the implicit contradiction between this thesis and that of Lammens regarding the prosperous and flourishing commerce of the Meccan "capitalists"? This latter thesis is even less admissible than that of Caetani; see, on this subject, my study, *Une explication marxiste de l'Islam par un ecclésiastique épiscopalien* (*Hesperis*, 1954), referring to *Muhammad at Mecca* by Montgomery Watt.

<sup>6</sup> For example, A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 2nd ed., 1952, p. 207.

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“Zur Soziologie der Imperialismen” which is highly relevant to our subject.<sup>7</sup> He displays there the most remarkable talent, which would come as no surprise to those who knew this man, without doubt one of the most cultivated individuals of his time. Approaching the subject in an absolutely novel fashion, that of a psychological and sociological comparison between the various imperialisms, over the course of time, Schumpeter also does not believe that the Arab conquest was, primarily, a religious phenomenon. It was a product of the mental disposition of the conquering tribes in the social and economic milieu in which they previously lived. For the detail, I refer to my translation of his arguments.

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## II

I propose now to present some critical observations on the subject of these theses, confining myself to taking that of Caetani as an example, the essential concept being that my predecessors should have been much more precise and systematic in their approach to questions, which could not be reduced to unduly unequivocal points of view. It is for this reason that I leave aside certain errors of fact which could be observed in his work,<sup>8</sup> in order to arrive at the essence.

- a) Even if Caetani's theory was accurate in its general form, it is not admissible in the terms whereby it is presented to us. It was not because Arabia was in the process of desiccation that the Arabs launched their conquests, but because it was already dry. It was a case of *aridita* and not of *inaridimento*. Historians are not geologists, and as far as they are concerned Arabia was already as desiccated in 570 as it was in 632, as desiccated in 632 as in 661, or in 732. Furthermore, if the desiccation was progressive, it is hard to understand why these emigrations, and in particular the Arab conquest, took place in waves. Although the contrary is not inconceivable, it would be appropriate for the partisans of *inaridimento* to supply us with a coherent theory in regard to this subject,

<sup>7</sup> I have translated and annotated the pages regarding Arab imperialism (*Revue Africaine*, 1950, n° III) The two articles, translated into English and published in book form, constitute his contribution to general sociology.

<sup>8</sup> *Studi di Storia Orientale*, I, p. 367: “Invano si cercherebbe nel Corano un'esortazione a morire per la fede”; the houris, etc. are definitely promised, in compensation for services rendered to Islam, “pur conservando sempre salva la vita”. Now, as is read in the Qur'ān (s. III, v. 194, Kazimirski): “I shall erase the sins of those who suffer for my cause, who fight and are fallen. I shall bring them into gardens watered by rivers”.



something which they are reluctant to provide. How could a cause which proceeded slowly and in continuous fashion have such abrupt effects?<sup>9</sup>

- [56] b) Authors have not distinguished, as in my opinion they should have done, between the various phases of the Arab conquest; it is not by any means certain and it is even improbable that similar causes – let alone a single cause – could explain for example the first wave, that which followed the death of the Prophet, as well as one of the later ones, for example the conquest of Egypt and of southern France, by the Umayyad rulers of Damascus.<sup>10</sup>
- c) Another cause of obscurity, which has engendered much confusion, is the fact that no distinction has been made between two concepts which should be rigorously separated in analysis, although in practice<sup>11</sup> there are connections between them – the nature of the Arab conquest and the causes of its success.

A conquest can have a variety of sociological characteristics: economic, religious, psychological, dynastic, etc. But this is something quite other than the reasons for the success, or failure, of the conquest in question: superiority of weaponry, or of commanders, or of troops, adroit diplomacy leading to the conclusion of advantageous alliances, the element of chance, in other words – unforeseeable events with causes too complex ever to have been analysed by us, etc.<sup>12</sup>

- d) Finally, Caetani's thesis is at fault in that it is univocal, i.e. it tries, *a priori*, to explain a phenomenon by a single cause; this is a tendency very

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<sup>9</sup> It is well known that certain machines transform one movement into another that is very different; for example, the piston of a locomotive transforms a rectilinear back-and-forth movement into a continuous circular movement. Nature, in the form of geysers, would offer us a type of Caetanian mechanism, but ... the explanation is never supplied to us by Caetani. It should come as no surprise, observing me in search of analogies: others could be found, according to certain theoreticians, in the mechanism of economic crises which mark, sometimes, phases in the prosperity-depression cycles. To clarify my thinking on this subject, I refer to a curious and little-known book: Michel Petrovitch, *Mécanismes communs aux phénomènes disparates*, Paris 1921.

<sup>10</sup> Although they were almost continuous, from 1792 to 1812, the military campaigns launched by the French in Europe did not have entirely the same character at the beginning and at the end of this period.

<sup>11</sup> And perhaps even in theory: I am thinking of the theory of "cycles of mutual dependence" of my revered Master, Vilfredo Pareto, *Sociologie Générale*, French ed., *passim* and in particular paras. 220 and f., 229 and f.: the element supposedly the "cause" undergoes the reaction of the element supposedly the "effect", but I cannot insist here on this idea.

<sup>12</sup> For example the death of the Empress Elizabeth which led directly, in my opinion, to the victory of Frederick the Great. (If she had been assassinated at his behest, chance would not have been a factor.)

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widespread among people,<sup>13</sup> [57] and it can sometimes even be advantageous, but it needs to be resisted when an overall view of things is the objective. This tendency may be advantageous for the analysis of reality, especially where the author detaches an important factor and proposes to study its action in isolation, but synthesis is subsequently necessary and then it is perceived, not only that numerous causes have played a part, which is practically always the case in social reality, but also that, even as an initial approximation,<sup>14</sup> a single one does not give a clear enough image of reality.

### III

History gives us innumerable examples of social phenomena which have complex causes or aspects, but very often there is a refusal to see them, whether because, from a purely dispassionate point of view, one is seduced by the theory of the single cause, or because political or religious fervour prevents you from seeing the facts as they are.

And here are three examples chosen at random:

- 1) The Reformation of the sixteenth century was indisputably a major religious movement which had a long gestation period (Huss, Savonarola, etc.) but the reasons for its success should not be sought solely in this domain: the major financial benefits that could be drawn from it by the Princes, in England, in Germany, in Scandinavia, to say nothing of Henry VIII and his love affairs, should be taken into consideration too. Depending on the tendency to which the author subscribes,<sup>15</sup> he will neglect one of these aspects in favour of the other.
- [58] 2) Another great religious movement (here in the psychological and sociological, not in the theologico-dogmatic sense) swept across Europe

<sup>13</sup> For example the historical materialism of Marx, in its strictest form, or indeed the positive theory of interest promoted by von Bohm-Bawerk; as has been very well demonstrated by A. Landry (*L'intérêt du capital*) certain errors on the part of this great economist are due to his unbelievable obstinacy in refusing to acknowledge more than one single cause accounting for the phenomenon in question.

<sup>14</sup> Consider the function  $F = ax + by + cz + \dots$ ; there are cases where the variations of  $F$  are well explained by the variation of  $x$  alone; for example we have  $a = 10^0$ ,  $b = 10^1$ ,  $c = 10^2$ , etc. but this is a rare case.

<sup>15</sup> For example, not only the Catholic but the Marxist too, if fanatical, will be impelled to neglect the religious aspect.

later: the French Revolution and its conquests.<sup>16</sup> For a long time, its adherents sought to emancipate, in the name of the new ideas, the masses oppressed by their sovereigns: this continued, at least until 1848; but we concern ourselves only with the military phase. It cannot be doubted that if account is not taken, above all, of the religious fervour of a whole people in arms, it will be impossible to understand the phenomenon of the revolutionary conquest, but it is equally certain that the economic aspect of the conquest, even as a way of explaining the ardour of the soldiers, played its part.<sup>17</sup>

- [59] 3) Another example is supplied to us by the complex phenomenon of the Resistance in France, which, according to one tendency or another, is analysed in such varied fashion. It is vital to distinguish between, at the very least: a) from the outset – summer of 1940 – the actions of people motivated by simple patriotism who were to become the fanatical adherents of this religion; b) from the end of June 1941 only, those of fanatical communists; c) among both of the above there were also adventurers – amateurs who sought out adventure no matter where, without any moral scruple;<sup>18</sup> from August 1944 onward, i.e. when there

<sup>16</sup> Comparisons with the Arab conquest are indeed appropriate. I should point out that, long before me, J. Wellhausen had this idea which he expressed in a single phrase but never developed (“Prolegomena zur ältesten Gesch. Des Islams” *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, vi, p. 51). I hope that the comparison, which I take a little further, will prove this well-founded. Bolshevism is a third of these waves, but worldwide this time.

<sup>17</sup> Thus, to his soldiers dying of hunger in the mountains above Nice, Bonaparte said in March 1796: “Men, *you are ill-nourished*, the Government can do nothing for you. I want to lead you into the most fertile plains in the world: rich provinces and great cities will be in your power. There you will find honour, glory and riches.” Is this not a proclamation which could have been endorsed by ‘Amr, or Khālid, or Shurāḥbīl? And in fact this was, subsequently, the objective. From Piacenza, on 9 May, he wrote to the minister of war Carnot: “We are going to establish substantial stores of grain, paddocks for 600 head of cattle, we are going to kit out our army anew. *All will put on weight*: the soldier will eat only bread from Gonesse, good victuals in plenty, good wine, etc. What we have taken from the enemy is incalculable: we have the use of hospitals for 15,000 patients, numerous warehouses full of grain and flour. I am sending you 20 pictures by the greatest masters, including Michelangelo.” [My emphasis.] From Milan at around the same time he wrote: “Piedmont is delivered from the Austrian tyranny. Thought has become free in Italy. There is no longer any inquisition, any intolerance, any despotism.” Here we have the religious aspect: the fanaticism for “Liberty”. The two aspects of the phenomenon are linked. This liaison is admirably expressed on the great staircase of the Museum of Naples, where this inscription relating to the year 1799 is to be found (I quote from memory): *I più insigni monumenti ne involava il vincitore straniero, in nome della Libertà*. The reference is to the troops of Championnet.

<sup>18</sup> Such as Récy for example, a man of admirable courage, who was subsequently imprisoned for theft, forgery and fraud, offences committed after the war.

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was no longer any risk, a disreputable and cowardly mob, in the name of the “Resistance”, exercised all kinds of private vengeance and practised reprehensible extortions. All of this was subsequently to bring electoral advantages to many people.<sup>19</sup> According to which phase of the movement is the focus of attention, judgement varies.

This then, is the thrust of my argument: if, for social phenomena with which we are capable of being well acquainted, it is clearly perceived that univocal theses are absolutely inadmissible, it is, *a priori*, entirely probable that the same applies to the Arab conquest.

On the other hand, I have positive reasons to believe that the religious factor played a far from negligible role in this conquest, as I shall demonstrate elsewhere. Here I confine myself to formulating a pointer in the right direction: everyone is, I think, in agreement that the rise of Muḥammad was a religious phenomenon, “purely religious” I would not hesitate to say. Everyone, on the other hand, is obliged to admit that, 100 years after the death of the Envoy of God, what was emerging [60] was a Muslim civilisation of typically religious character (*fiqh* in particular). And is it not reasonable to suppose that the transition from one to the other was facilitated by this religious character?

One last observation in conclusion: the criticisms that I address to my predecessors are purely objective and do not diminish the admiration which I feel for them, still less the value of their work. The greatest of men have committed errors (to which they have obstinately adhered, furthermore). Newton, towards the end of his life, wrote an absurd commentary on the Apocalypse. Goethe – whose works in the fields of botany and osteology deserve mention in the annals of science – wasted years of his life in pointless studies of the theory of light, claiming to refute that of Newton. Most absurd of all, finally, is the refutation of the theory of Lavoisier<sup>20</sup> contributed by one of the greatest naturalists the world has ever known, the genial pioneer Lamark. But all of this has been said before, and with far greater eloquence than I can manage, by Pierre Corneille:

However great the kings may be, they are the same as you and me,  
They can be wrong, like all humanity.

<sup>19</sup> Since history often repeats itself, it was not too difficult for the scientific sociologist to predict that soon to be observed, from this point of view, was a re-run of the Dreyfus affair, i.e. a movement beginning with a disinterested minority and ending with its opposite. See the article which I published in December 1944 (*Revue économique et sociale*) which had some difficulty getting past the censor.

<sup>20</sup> *Réfutation de la théorie pneumatique, ou de la nouvelle doctrine des chimistes modernes*, in-8°, Paris, chez Agasse, 1796.



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## OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE ARAB CONQUEST

*G.H. Bousquet*

[37] The most important remark to be made at the beginning of this article (forming a sequel to the one which I published in this very periodical: *Studia Islamica* II) is as follows: while the rise of an inspired Prophet is a quasi-normal event in human societies, the phenomenon of the Arab conquest is something, *a priori*, of a quite extraordinary nature, which never fails to astonish me, and in particular, whenever I talk about it to my students. This phenomenon definitely has extremely complex causes; it will be some considerable time before they can be unravelled. We are indeed far from supplying an explanation here, but we take this opportunity to express opposition to the tendency which has consisted, over the past half-century and more, in reducing the influence of the religious factor in accounting for this bewildering expansion;<sup>1</sup> as for the definitive formula [38] which will reveal to us the secret of this remarkable social event, being more modest than certain predecessors of mine – I concede this responsibility to a sociologist of the future, whom I have yet to meet.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A slightly more thorough-going study of the subject would be a comparative one: there are cases of slow expansion, that of the Roman Empire, and others which are rapid, that of the Empire of Alexander; there are numerous points of contrast between these two. There are others too, perhaps more instructive for us: in the year 1854, Commodore Perry forced the Japanese to renounce their total isolation from the rest of the world; less than 90 years later, the fall of Singapore allowed this people to think it was on its way to conquering half of the world. In the same order of ideas: in September 1574, the fall of Leiden which would mark the suppression of the revolt of the Low Countries, seemed imminent: seventy-four years later (for a short time admittedly) the second nation of Europe, and hence of the world, in terms of political power, was the United Provinces, which had conquered an immense overseas empire. Subjects for meditation indeed!

<sup>2</sup> If this formula could be expressed, let us say, by a system of equations, relating to a dynamic equilibrium (for that is what is involved), only a few of them would be found here at best (or perhaps the givens are confused with the unknowns), and some indications of the limits of size which certain quantities may not exceed. I see well enough the complexity of the problem, which I am incapable of resolving.

The phenomenon of the Arab conquest really is most disconcerting! Until the rise of the Prophet, the Arabs constituted a people, whose historical role, to say the least, had been one of the most mediocre, and its influence on the civilisation of the rest of humanity negligible. Living in a state of utter tribal anarchy, they never seriously threatened their neighbours, much more civilised than them.

Now, in less than twenty years, these populations destroyed the Persian Empire and dismantled the Byzantine Empire, taking possession of some of its wealthiest provinces. The series of conquests continued, and after approximately a century, they extended from Lisbon to India, and from the South of France to the cataracts of the Nile.

Furthermore:

- a) During the whole of this period, and beyond, rivalries between the conquering tribes did not come to an end: thus, as is well known, in Spain, quarrels dating back to the *jāhiliya* continued for a long time to harass the conquerors;<sup>3</sup>
- b) During this period, and on numerous occasions, the Arab nation was torn by civil wars. Understandably, on account of these internal dissensions, military operations were temporarily suspended; what is extraordinary, on the other hand, is that the peoples so recently conquered did not take advantage of this weakness to rebel and destroy the Empire;<sup>4</sup>
- [39] c) As a result of this conquest, a Muslim civilisation came into being having in many respects a very pronounced Arab character. Obviously, for certain aspects of the latter, this was impossible: thus, in terms of art, since the Arabs had no art. But their language was imposed, and as for *fiqh*, it was either an original creation of Muslim thought or it absorbed whole fragments of pre-Islamic institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> A more or less analogous phenomenon would be that of the rivalries existing at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, in Dar es-Salam, or in German New Guinea, between supporters of Frederick and of Marie-Therese. (We may observe in passing the sociologically important fact that Islam has never known political struggles based on the principle of legitimising a dethroned sovereign, irrespective of the personal merits of the interested party, except in relation to Shi'ism).

<sup>4</sup> As a way of approaching the nature of this phenomenon in a more thorough manner, it would be useful to proceed to a comparative examination of these causes: a) in a similar spirit, the attitude of the Italian League at the time of Hannibal's invasion; that of the entire colonial French Empire in June 1940: b) a counter-example, the Kabylie rebelling in 1871, etc.

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## I

I believe that it is necessary, at the outset, for the sake of clarity in this discussion, to distinguish very carefully between two things (which are, naturally, connected): the nature of the Arab conquest and its causes. This distinction has never been systematically applied by my predecessors.

Why, first of all, did the Arabs, for a century, continually pursue their attacks against their neighbours? To study the underlying motivations behind these offensives it to study the nature of the said conquests. Why did these offensives achieve such outstanding success? This is to study the causes of the victory. It is understood, for example, that a war may have causes which are ideological (wars of religion), political (dynastic interests), economic (taking control of a prosperous region), social (the conquests of the Bolsheviks); but the causes of final success need to be distinguished from these: it may be a matter of military superiority (armaments, or leadership, or the spirit and commitment of the troops), political superiority (successful diplomacy leading to the conclusion of alliances), or simply chance.

For a long time, it has been generally thought that the Arab conquest was of a purely religious nature and that religious fanaticism accounted for its success. The famous image of the warrior, holding the sword in one hand and the Qurān in the other, illustrates this conception.<sup>5</sup>

[40] Subsequently, ideas have changed and attention has been drawn to other factors. Caetani is the most famous of the authors who have defended them, but there are others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It figures in vignette form on the frontispiece of the old Mouradgea of Ohsson. Curiously, no Islamist has pointed how absurd this is: either it is the sword which is held in the left hand – inadvisable from a tactical point of view, or it is the Qurān, which for a Muslim is forbidden!

<sup>6</sup> I shall not reveal the ideas of the authors in question here, not discuss them: see my notes to the article in *Revue Africaine*, cited *infra*, and my contribution to *Mélanges Levi Della Vida*. I would like to draw the attention of Islamists to the remarkable sociological study by the economist J. Schumpeter, my mentor, from which I have translated (*R.A.* 1950, II) the section relating to Arab imperialism, which has so far gone unnoticed by the academic establishment. In a domain neighbouring ours, we note, in addition, A. and E. Kulischer *Kriegs-und Wanderzüge (Weltgeschichte als Völkerbewegung)*, Berlin 1932, who accept the thesis of Caetani, as also does A.A. Vassilief, *Hist. of the Byzantine Empire*, 2nd ed. 1952 (p. 207 and f.) but the latter adds some important remarks. The two great founders of islamology do not seem to have taken an interest in the question, at least to my knowledge; however Snouck, in a few lines, has declared that Caetani's theory was too univocal (*Verspr. Geschr.* I. p. 370): "Geestelijke en materiele drijkrachten hebben het bewerkt".



## II

It is not only necessary to distinguish, in general, between the nature and cause of conquests, but this also needs to be done in terms of the various periods, which are, at least, three in number: a) the conquest of Arabia, which coincides approximately with the warlike activity of the Prophet himself; b) the major conquests which followed his death; c) the expansion of the Umayyad Empire.

It is not claimed that these three phases necessarily had the same nature and same causes, and here I shall refrain from commenting on the last: from the moment when a powerful and well-organised state exists, the conquests which the latter achieves do not seem to be such extraordinary phenomena.

- a) Authors most often pay scant attention to the first phase. For the latter, I propose to go further than they themselves are implicitly willing to go, since I claim that, even in the time of Muḥammad, the economic factor had a role to play: were not the vanquished required to accept the Prayer, and to pay tribute? There is thus a parallel which [41] can already be made with what was to happen subsequently.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore the Qurʾān (III, 146) says explicitly with regard to the defeat of Uḥūd: “Some of you desired the goods of this world, others desired the life hereafter”. Things are, in reality, more complex: different motives induce people to act, to varying degrees. The two categories which the Qurʾān distinguishes are only border-line cases.
- b) It is here that we find what also existed outside the Arab conquest as such: among the warriors, as well as fighters for the Holy War, there were men eager to fight, hoping for the opportunity to obtain booty: whether we focus our attention on one group or the other, unilaterally, we shall be elaborating an extreme and partial theory which has to be rejected. For example, if, in the French army, we turn our attention to the Foreign Legion, or the Senegalese contingents, we will deny that patriotism should be considered when accounting for their achievements, and yet this would be false, in that it ignores the fact that their officers are French patriots.

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<sup>7</sup> That which van Vloten has to say, *Recherches sur la domination des Arabes*, etc., 1894 (Verh. Ak. der Wet., Amsterdam, Letterk., I, no 3): “The Arab occupation generally gave the appearance of a people living at the expense of and in the charge of another,” should be placed alongside the account to be read *apud* Wellhausen (p. 29 and f.), regarding the representatives of Muḥammad among the Arabs themselves, conquered by him, charged with the duty of collecting taxes (*Proleg. Zur Aelleslen Gesch.*, etc., *Skizzen u. Vorarbeiten*, VI).

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This should not be taken as meaning that Arab troops were animated by the hope of booty, and their chiefs, by the hope of eternal reward,<sup>8</sup> – since we know for a fact that such was not the case for some of these chiefs, the most important ones – but that these two motivations are to be found in both groups.

Furthermore, it is always to be observed, and always has been so, that in human societies, it is possible, when considering any movement whatsoever, to distinguish between at least three groups of persons: [42] fanatics on the one hand, incorrigible adversaries on the other, and finally between the two, the great mass: the unsure, the feeble and the undecided, as well as those seeking above all else to act in their own interest: all of this mass is ready to “run to the aid of the victor”, which creates in society a state of unstable equilibrium: an advantage scored by one of the factions earns it the support of the third party:<sup>9</sup> equilibrium is thus essentially unstable.

But if success also engenders success, there is another element in our case: was not success at the same time proof of the divine mission, of Muḥammad and of his successors? Whence there was a development of religious fervour as such among those who had been recruited more or less voluntarily, in any case not through religious enthusiasm. The following is a parallel example, easier to understand: in 1870–71, on the battlefields of France, and in the Galerie des Glaces, the German alliance was sealed between the victors and the vanquished, of the battles of 1866, at Langensalza and at Aschaffenburg, but, specifically, Worth, Metz, Sedan, etc. – did this not lead to the birth of the patriotic religion of Unity among the vanquished, becoming victors in their turn?

Thus we see how impossible it is to accept any univocal theory in this matter, and how religious fervour has nevertheless succeeded in manifesting itself among people who initially joined the ranks for other reasons.

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<sup>8</sup> The question which we are examining is complicated by the following fact which, unless I am mistaken, Caetani and his supporters do not take into account, although in some respects it could be seen as favouring their theses: this eternal reward is of a material nature, it is “Muhammad’s Paradise”.

<sup>9</sup> We take as an example what Caetani says (*Annali*, II, p. 77) regarding the conversion of ‘Amr and of Khālid, which comes about when the Prophet appears victorious, and they see in him the means to satisfy their appetites. I shall cite only two parallels in the contemporary history of France: the exploitation of the Dreyfus Affair, and that of the Resistance, manifestations of the Religion of Justice, and of Homeland, by people to whom any kind of idealism was alien. Depending on whether these movements are observed at their beginning or at the end, naturally enough the tendency will be to judge them differently. This sociological mechanism is absolutely general.

Another point of view deserves to claim our attention, and I believe this has never been addressed before, this being the conception that the *ridda* was proclaimed in the name of “false” prophets [“false” because they had failed]. It is true that, as Caetani has expressed it very well, the tribes subjugated by the Prophet himself rebelled because for them his death simply marked the end of a purely political pact, not [43] a religious one, concluded *intuitu personae*.<sup>10</sup> However, this revolt was not made in the name of al-Lāt, or of al-‘Uzza, or simply with the proclamation of a desire to return to the former state of affairs, a quest for “Restoration”. Not at all: the phraseology at least,<sup>11</sup> and no doubt the basis too, is religious. Is this not proof that the rise of Muḥammad had – in what happened to be a favourable ambience – created major agitation of spirits, agitation of a religious nature, among people with little inclination towards fervour in this domain; then, with the success of the Caliphs, agitation had been favourable to the success of the Muslim armies – where were the victors and the vanquished of the *ridda*? I would be tempted to believe it.

How, on the other hand, is the religious motive to be set aside when we read *apud* Zamakhsharī,<sup>12</sup> describing the famous battle of the Yarmuk: “The Muslim preachers did not cease to encourage the combatants: Prepare yourselves for the encounter with the houris of the big black eyes and for meeting your Lord in the gardens of beatitude, cried Abū Horeyra. And to be sure,” adds the narrator, “never has a day been seen when more heads fell than on the day of the Yarmuk.” Here we have an account illustrating the classical thesis of religious fanaticism, and belying that of the desiccation of Arabia!

Now, who were those who died thus? Here there is another historical point that is well known and accepted by everyone as [44] authentic, regarding the history of the Qur’ān. Everyone knows, in fact, that if ‘Uthmān undertook the compilation of the sacred text, it was because little by little, those who knew it by heart were disappearing, especially as martyrs on the battlefields.

<sup>10</sup> *Annali*, II, p. 454. For other “conversions” see p. 183 and f., the lists of gifts received by the pagans in this context [which is entirely compatible with the theory of the *zekāt*] and p. 187 and f., the case of the Hawāzīn who, it seems, became Muslims in order to have their wives returned to them.

<sup>11</sup> I make this reservation because what we have here could be what Pareto has called a case of “derivation” but I cannot expatiate on this point. Here, I confine myself to showing that Caetani’s supporters should at least have discussed the important fact that I am highlighting.

<sup>12</sup> *Fārik*, cited by de Goeje, *Mém. conquête Syrie*, 2nd ed., p. 117. De Goeje says this account is authentic. On the other hand I am well aware that the egregious Abū Horeyra tends to be regarded by Islamists as a less than entirely reliable source, although it should be observed that here he is not relating the statements of others; on the contrary, these are others relating their own, which is quite different.

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Can it be said of these people – whose faith must surely have encouraged others on the path of religious fervour – that they were not motivated by spiritual impulses?

These are the numerous reasons which make it impossible for me to assert that the Arab conquest was not, primarily, of a religious nature.

## III

The opponents of this proposition have, it is true, one apparently very potent argument in favour of their thesis: the Arab conquest, they say, was not of a religious nature, since the victors did not seek to convert the vanquished, and this argument seems all the stronger in that the fact adduced by them is, I believe, indisputable.<sup>13</sup>

Now on the one hand, the authors who have dealt with this question were brought up in a Christian atmosphere, where the notion of universal expansion goes without saying, and they were having to deal with Islam, a religion which has not, in theory, renounced the intention of spreading worldwide, and which was founded by a Prophet who during his lifetime, tried by persuasion, then by force, to rally around him the greatest possible number of adherents. Taking account of this fact, that the conquering Arabs were not missionaries, they have concluded: “The Arab conquest did not have a religious character”.

I willingly recognise that in the facts which I have just mentioned (tendency towards proselytism on the part of Muḥammad, and towards universalism in Islam as an established faith) there is something which surprises us, when they are compared with the attitude of the conquerors; but this is because we are much too accustomed [45] to imagining that a religious movement is necessarily directed towards proselytism. This is a false premise.

- a) First there are religions which have never sought to make converts (for example Hinduism and Parseeism) or which no longer seek them (Judaism);
- b) Then there are those conquests which did not have a religious purpose but which did have conversion as a systematic result. This has been admirably expressed by Schumpeter, speaking of the “characteristic fact that the

<sup>13</sup> A Nestorian bishop writes, fifteen years after the conquest: “The Arabs do not fight the Christian religion, but rather they protect our faith. They respect our priests and our saintly men, and make donations to our churches and convents”. (De Goeje, *Mém. conqu. Syrie*, 2nd ed., p. 106).

Spanish, though staunchly Catholic, never dreamed of motivating their conquests by a religious cause.”<sup>14</sup> Here the objective was not religious, only the result;

- c) Finally and above all, this being what interests us most, there are military expeditions of an indisputably religious character which have never been aimed at the conversion of their adversaries. I will not elaborate on the subject of conflicts between Hebrews and Philistines, although the religious motive was not excluded in the former, but two later events constitute an excellent illustration of our thesis. The first of these involves the campaigns of Gustavus Adolphus in Germany: it was the desire to come to the aid of his co-religionists that impelled him to take this course, and it is known that his troops, superbly disciplined, were motivated like him by a religious spirit;<sup>15</sup> the great German evangelical association was known as the Gustav-Adolf Verein, and rightly so. However, he never attempted to convert a single Catholic in the regions [46] conquered by him. Exactly the same applies to the conquest of Ireland by Cromwell; his troops, according to the Cavaliers, were “a mob of preaching peasants and artisans” and he himself, before setting out on the campaign, “delivered a sermon and commented on various texts from the Holy Scriptures, analogous [sic] to his enterprise”.<sup>16</sup> One thing is absolutely certain: this army of fanatics was not interested in converting a single Irishman, but the taking of Drogheda was marked by horrendous massacres. “All the priests and monks have been put to death indiscriminately,” he wrote and Guizot notes: “Women and children were accorded no more mercy than

<sup>14</sup> I would like to illustrate this thought on the part of my mentor with a single fact: the contract of association (Panama, 10 March 1526) concluded between F. Pizarro and two other associates (including a priest) with a view to the conquest of Peru, contains stipulations concerning what each is required to contribute to the enterprise, and the sharing of future booty, “cualquier riqueza de oro, plata, perlas, esmeraldas, diamantas, y rubies”, etc. The reading of this document is very instructive. I have found the original text of it in the classic Prescott, *Conquest of Peru*, appendix vi.

<sup>15</sup> Schiller, as a historian, has devoted some treatment to this fact (*Guere de trente ans*, I, L. II, p. 117 of the Reclam edition): “Eine ungekunstelte lebendige Gottesfurcht” he says. As a poet, he summarised this in a verse of his trilogy (I, *Wallenstein*, sc. VI), Gustave: “Der machte ein Kirch aus seinem Lager”.

<sup>16</sup> We think that, among these texts, there should be, among others – but the Holy Bible offers us only an embarrassment of choices – Joshua X, where it is only a question of putting the inhabitants of conquered cities to the sword (this not demonstrating the historicity of the facts), vv. 28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 39. Another individual, among the Catholics this time, who put this pious Jewish tradition into practice was Tilly: in a spirit of Christian charity, he massacred the 40,000 Protestant inhabitants of Magdebourg (May 1631).

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the armed men".<sup>17</sup> Cromwell said "I am persuaded that this is a just punishment inflicted by God on these barbarians" (referring to the troops and the clergy at least).

But the best example of conquests with a religious character, where no spirit of conversion was ever manifested, is that of the Crusades; the great enthusiasm which aroused western Europe at that time and impelled the Crusaders to rescue the Holy Places, not to convert the Muslims, which they never did.

Thus the whole of this argument, "the Arab conquests did not have a religious character, since the victors did not want to convert the vanquished", has no merit, the postulate which it implies being belied by history: there is no reason to suppose that religious incentive did not play a very important role.

There is in fact a very good reason which establishes this and which deserves to be discussed in depth, although this has never happened; if we take the history of the first centuries of the Hegira [47] as a whole, we see, at the beginning, an inspiration not at all influenced by material interests, but assuredly influenced by religious motives, and at the end, a new and characteristically religious civilisation, and can anyone deny that what constituted the transition from one to the other, the conquest, had a religious aspect? For myself, I fail to understand the logic of such a denial, because this seems to me a quasi-physical impossibility.

I can grasp well enough the notion that the tribes, united by Muḥammad, were thrown into the attack on the surrounding provinces and subjugated them, solely for non-religious motives. But how, subsequently, could the Muslim civilisation have been born? Why did these people not blend into the conquered populations, whose civilisation was superior to theirs, like the Barbarians in the Roman west, the Manchus in China? This is what would normally have happened.

Certainly, Muslim institutions owed a lot to the surrounding milieu, but they could never have been born if, among the conquerors there had not been men, themselves inspired, like the Prophet, by religious zeal, and having trained disciples, this until the emergence of the first groups of Doctors of Law. As is well said by Schacht:<sup>18</sup> "The period of the first three generations after the death of the Prophet... is, in many respects, the most important, as well as the most obscure, on account of the rarity of contemporary testimonies, for the history of Muslim law." He himself dated his enquiry back

<sup>17</sup> Guizot, *Révolut. D'Angleterre*, ed. 1847, II, p. 108; *La République et Cromwell*, ed. 1864, I, pp. 86, 93, 94.

<sup>18</sup> *Esquisse d'une histoire du droit musulman*, p. 15.

to the beginning of the Umayyad period,<sup>19</sup> and he needed to go back no further. But, for us, the problem is posed: who were these people of the first generation who took this administration in hand, which teachers did they have among the pious Muslims of the first times, arriving with the conquerors? The problem may be insoluble for us, but it exists; since it must be that within the Arab army (which at that time was barely to be distinguished from civil society), there were [48] people intent on imposing institutions manifesting a certain religious ideal.

This does not necessarily imply a mass conversion, as some Europeans erroneously believe. From the outset, the Prophet had respected the religion of the Jews (I do not say the Jews themselves) and that of the Christians. A fact recorded by Ṭabari<sup>20</sup> is interesting: Khālīd found it abnormal that the Christian Arabs of the Euphrates sided with the Persians, since for him, Islam was the common cause of the Arabs. Islam could thus have been, in the beginning, a racial and warlike religion the objective of which was to enslave their neighbours, not convert them.

#### IV

We formulate now certain observations on the subject of the causes of the conquest, in other words the reasons for the successes achieved by the Arab armies.

One first point seems to be established: they did not have superiority in weapons or in military organisation;<sup>21</sup> on the contrary, they were foiled by the fortifications of Byzantium, and they did not possess any gunpowder. If, under the Umayyads, the Arabs had a navy, this was by way of imitation of their enemies; they made no innovations in this sphere. On the other hand, chance worked in their favour in two respects:

- a) As in the case of revolutionary France, we find that there emerged among the Arabs in the time of the Prophet, a certain number of individuals who showed exceptional abilities in military command, when they were given the opportunity to show it. Their names are well known. Furthermore, the Muslims found in ʿUmar a head of state of the highest order. Here there is something which we must take as a datum of the problem, because we

<sup>19</sup> *Esquisse*, p. 19, *Origins of Muh. Jurisprudence*, p. 190 and f.

<sup>20</sup> *Apud* Wellhausen, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Contra: Macedonian phalange, Roman legion, Spanish infantry, usage of the horse (Cortez), or of European armament (colonial conquests in the 19th century).

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cannot go back further, the causes [49] of this being too complex for us to unravel them.

- b) On the other hand, the two empires which the Arabs attacked were in a greatly enfeebled state (the same thing must have worked in their favour at the time of the conquest of Spain, although not in Gaul). The empires had recently been at war and religious dissensions within the Byzantine Empire contributed significantly to the success of the Arabs who in addition, in Syria, found themselves dealing with a population of the same race as themselves, while Egypt was in a state of administrative anarchy:<sup>22</sup> unity between governors was entirely absent and the army was very badly organised.<sup>23</sup>

The study of chance as a factor in the explanation of historical events, is an immense and emotive subject, and such a study, I believe, has never yet been undertaken;<sup>24</sup> it also seems dangerous, since it is virtually impossible for us to say what would have happened, if this or that factor, owed to chance, had not applied: we can, at the most, say that a certain thing would not then have happened, in any case.

This said, and things being, at a given moment, the way they are, it is possible to speak of chance, or otherwise, in the case of any human enterprise, giving the term a more limited meaning: there would be subjective chance if the person embarking on this enterprise were to be ignorant of the factors favourable to him and took no account of them in making a decision; for example, in the case of an equitable lottery, [50] chance is only a factor for the one who participates in it; in the case of stock market speculation, it applies to the foolish person who buys or sells according to chance, it does not apply to the one who foresees the future rise – or fall – in stock prices; finally, if the

<sup>22</sup> Vassilief, *op. cit.*, p. 207 and f., quoting Maspero, *Organ. milit. de l'Égypte Byz.*, p. 119. In Syria, excellent reception accorded by the inhabitants to the invaders: *De Goeje*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30, 103, 104.

<sup>23</sup> Even according to more restrained points of view, chance has played a role favourable to the Arabs, for example the fall of Alexandria (end of 641, or early 642) is closely associated with the death of Heraclius (Flugel, *Gesch. der Araber*, 2nd ed., 1867, p. 96). Of course, the death of an individual is the most normal phenomenon, the only truly normal phenomenon in his life, but not his death at a given moment and, when his adversary has neither seen it nor, still less, caused it (political assassination), we have the right to talk about historical chance, as in the case of the death of the Empress Elizabeth, which saved Frederick II from disaster. The reader may sense that I could have a lot to say on this subject, but it is not our present concern.

<sup>24</sup> At the time when this article was being written, I was unaware of the work of Vendryes, devoted to the role of chance in the conquest of Egypt by Bonaparte.



speculator, through manipulation, creates variations in price from which he expects to profit, this is no longer an issue of chance, objectively speaking.

Now, in the case of the Arab conquest, there was, in my opinion, chance in both senses of the term: objective chance, because the favourable historical conjuncture existed without the Arabs having contributed to it in any way at all, and subjective chance because – unless I am seriously mistaken – at the moment of launching the attack, they were unaware of the existence of these factors: they were in the position of someone playing the lottery.

In summary, the achievement of this uncultured people, imposing its domination from Narbonne to the banks of the Indus within the space of a century, depended on a whole combination of circumstances: the birth of the Prophet, whose activity, both religious and political, facilitated the unification of Arabia, the fact that this country was then a reservoir of talented war leaders and had also produced ‘Umar, finally the fact that on three occasions, at the most crucial of junctures, the Arabs were confronted by states, apparently powerful but in fact, exhausted. In default of a single one of these factors, the Arab conquest is inconceivable.<sup>25</sup>

There is an instructive comparison to be made here with the Spanish conquests in South America. If the state of affairs in Europe in the second half of the fifteenth century is considered, it will be understood at once that it was not a question of chance: a) that the Europeans had discovered America; b) that the European powers conquered the territories thus discovered. The birth of Columbus, or of Cortez, or of Pizarro, was not necessary for this. The superiority of Europe assures us that this would have happened in one fashion or another (this does not mean that [51] the later course of history might not have been entirely different,<sup>26</sup> depending on which power took control of which territory). This seizure of land by Europe was bound to happen, whatever was the relative balance of forces between European powers.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In this last paragraph, I have adapted to my subject, almost word for word, the penultimate paragraph of a work of the very highest order, which has remained virtually unknown: J. Cordier, *Jeanne d'Arc* (Paris 1948), where the author summarises the absolutely exceptional circumstances which account for the rise of this extraordinary historical figure. I regret the fact that I was unaware of the existence of this book until after the composition of the present article.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. L. Rougier, p. 226, of his remarkable *Traité de la Connaissance* (Paris 1955): "... it may happen that very minimal differences in the initial conditions of a system lead to considerable divergences in the final phenomena. It is then said that these phenomena are obedient to chance, which does not mean that these phenomena are exempted, in law, from Laplace-style determinism... but that knowledge of them is as impracticable as it would be if they were effectively so".

<sup>27</sup> Precisely analogous observations could be made regarding the conquest of Morocco by "a European power" at the start of the 20th century.

On the contrary, the Arab conquest is unthinkable without the birth of the Prophet (it had to be him and not another) and without the balance of forces then prevailing in the two Empires, as it existed at that moment. Thus we see the total difference in the situation, in the historical mechanism.

Once the conquest was realised, it is quite understandable that in the new empire, a new culture should appear, although it is strange, as we have noted, that the Arab element should prove so important.

On the other hand, what for me remains very obscure is why, after a few centuries, this civilisation stagnated almost completely for a millennium, in such a way that it was very soon overtaken by European-Christian civilisation, a situation which has persisted into the present day: it is here, after the rise of Muḥammad and the Arab conquest, that the third fundamental problem arises of the general sociology of Islam.

A final word regarding the method employed in my double research: it consists in trying to sift out from historical facts, *types of social mechanisms*, which, during a certain period of time, seem to have been fundamentally the same in the most diverse places and epochs. I believe it to be useful, even fruitful, but like all methods, it has its limitations. Here the greatest danger lies in letting the imagination run and letting oneself be influenced by personal aspirations. In social matters the thinker often imagines that he has discovered [52] an idea, a theory, a principle, which must explain everything. In reality, either these ideas, etc. explain nothing at all<sup>28</sup> in the view of the scholar, or they are only partially true.<sup>29</sup> For my part, I say that my ideas are essentially open to revision, according to the progress of science: my conception of types of mechanisms<sup>30</sup> needs to be closely subservient to the data of history. No theory explains everything. The only difference is that I know this, while the builders of the above-mentioned systems do not.

<sup>28</sup> "This long sequence of particular causes, which make and unmake Empires, depends on the secret commands of divine Providence" (Bossuet, *Discours, in fine*: III, ch. VIII). This is the negation of the possibility of any kind of sociological science; in the present case, His commands remain unknown to us.

<sup>29</sup> Among other examples, Marxist dogmas: by the very fact of being dogmas, they impede the progress of independent science, while being, in part, compatible with the truth.

<sup>30</sup> It is a known fact that explanations of the mechanist type are abandoned in our times in favour of physics: our descendants, in future centuries, will be able to act accordingly, when sociology will have the same status as physics in the 19th century.



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**THE NOMAD AS EMPIRE BUILDER:  
A COMPARISON OF THE ARAB  
AND MONGOL CONQUESTS**

*John J. Saunders*

History records innumerable assaults by the barbarian nomads of the steppes and deserts on the realms of civilization. In some cases, the invaders overturned an organized state, as the Hyksos did Egypt, the Ephthalites northern India, and the Kin northern China. In others, they were thrown back, as the Huns were from the Roman Empire and the Avars from Byzantium and Frankland. Some shed their barbarism and acquired the arts of civilization, like the Magyars and the Ottoman Turks, others remained illiterate pastoralists to the end, like the Scythians and the Cumans. Two created world empires as a result of conquests the scope and magnitude of which still grip the imagination. These were the Arabs of the seventh century and the Mongols of the thirteenth, whose spectacular achievements pose problems concerning the interrelationship of nomadic and sedentary societies and of the nature of the "drives" which impel pastoral peoples to burst out of their homelands not simply to raid and plunder but to establish political domination over their civilized neighbors. The Arab and Mongol conquests also raise the question why the

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former cleared the ground for the erection of a distinctive new world culture and the latter did not.

The historian who seeks to answer the manifold queries which a study of these nomadic imperialisms poses is faced at the outset by a startling contrast in documentation. Virtually no contemporary accounts of the Arab conquests have come down to us: the Byzantine and Arabic chroniclers of the late *eighth* century are our first witnesses for the conquests of the *seventh*,<sup>1</sup> and we can therefore never recapture the "feel" of this outpouring from the Arabian deserts or understand how the men of that age reacted to it in the way in which, for example, the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris enable us to discern dimly how the life of a cultivated Gallo-Roman provincial was affected by the Gothic invasion of Gaul. The Mongol onslaught on civilization took place, by contrast, in the full light of history. Chinese and Persians, Franks and Armenians, tell us what happened and write of what they saw and heard at the time. Merchants and missionaries travelled the length and breadth of Asia, interviewed the Mongol leaders, and watched the working of the mighty military machine created by the genius of Chingis Khan. Our information in this case is impressively copious and based on the observations of intelligent and educated men of many different races, from the Persian bureaucrat Juwaini to the Flemish Franciscan William of Rubruck.

With this caution in mind, we may approach our first problem: what triggered off these explosions?

We may remind ourselves that in ancient and medieval times the majority of the human race did not belong to settled societies, but were in Greco-Roman parlance "barbarians," hunters, fishers or shepherds dwelling in tents or forests, governed by tribal custom, knowing nothing of a territorial state, incapable of building cities and destitute of a written literature. Civilizations (Chinese, Hindu, Persian, Greco-Roman) were mere cases in deserts of barbarism and were under constant threat of attack from nomadic tribes. Although these primitive peoples were found

<sup>1</sup> The earliest surviving Arabic account of the conquest is the *Futuh al-Buldan* of al-Baladhuri, who died in 892: Eng. tr. Hitti & Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, 2 vols., New York, 1916-24.

all along the broad "steppe belt" stretching from the Sudan to Mongolia, the real nursery of nomadism was always Central Asia, from the days of the Hiung-nu and Yue-chi before the Christian era to those of the Uzbeks and Kalmuks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Negro peoples of the Sudan were shut off from the civilized fringe of North Africa by the dreary wastes of the Sahara, and the untamed Berbers, who lived north of that desert, though they might on occasion break through to the coast, never crossed the sea to threaten Europe till the Arabs enlisted their support at the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries and led them to the conquest of Spain and the invasion of France.

Once, and once only, did the tide of nomadism flow vigorously out of Arabia. Bedouin *raids* on the towns and villages of Syria and Iraq had been going on since the dawn of history, and occasionally an Arab tribe would set up a semi-civilized kingdom on the edge of the desert, as the Nabataeans did at Petra or the Palmyrenes at Tadmur, but *conquests* only occurred at the rise of Islam. It was the fashion a generation ago to subscribe to the Becker-Caetani thesis that these conquests were explicable almost wholly in economic terms, and that the preaching of Muhammad was a mere occasion, not a cause.<sup>2</sup> It was argued that the population of Arabia was rising, that climatic change had enlarged the desert at the expense of the town, thereby precipitating the decline of the old agricultural society of the Yemen (a decline symbolized by the famous "bursting of the dam" of Ma'rib in the sixth century), that nomadism was on the increase, and that shortage of food and grazing-land forced the Bedouins into a policy of military expansion northwards. Even if Islam had never been, the defenders of this theory seem to say, the Arab conquests would have taken place all the same. In further support of their contention that the new religion had little or nothing to do with it, they pointed out that the average Bedouin tribesman was notoriously secular-minded and had no firm religious belief, and that the invaders made no attempt to force their newly-acquired

<sup>2</sup> L. Caetani, *Studi di storia orientale*, Milan, 1, 1911, "L'Arabia preistorica e il progressivo essiccamento della terra." C. H. Becker, *Islamstudien*, Leipzig, 1, 1924, "Der Islam als Problem" (Reprint of an article published in 1910).

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faith on the conquered. These considerations no longer carry the conviction they did fifty years ago. Islam provided an incentive, a rallying-cry, a unity which had never before existed among the Arabs, and though economic motives are not to be denied, it is improbable that a long, vigorous effort could have been so sustained without the impetus of religious zeal.<sup>3</sup> Islam was admittedly an *urban* faith, to which the Bedouins adhered more out of self-interest than genuine conviction, but the conquests were led and organized by townsmen like Abu Bakr and Omar, who were sincere believers and honestly thought that God had given their people the dominion of the world.

Even if we accept the theory that the resolve to attack the Byzantine and Persian territories was a direct consequence of the *Ridda*, the existence of Islam is necessary to explain what happened. Many tribes which had acknowledged Muhammad in his lifetime, renounced allegiance to his party at his death, on the ground that their compact with him was a purely personal one and did not bind them to loyalty to his successors. This falling away from Islam, known as the *Ridda* or apostasy, was resisted by the Medinan chiefs, and with some difficulty the revolt was suppressed. Abu Bakr and Omar realized, however, that the best way to keep the Bedouins within the fold was to appeal to their instinct for war and plunder and to mobilize them in a common profitable enterprise, namely, foreign conquest. Hence the momentous decision was taken to launch military expeditions against Iraq and Syria, a decision which meant that Islam would not stay contained within the Arabian peninsula. Whether this is the whole truth is doubtful, but in any case religion cannot be excluded from the argument. "Heaven is before you, the devil and hellfire are behind you!" is a cry which must have had *some* moral or propagandistic value: no Arab armies had been urged forward in this manner before. When Othman became Caliph in 644, he set to work to prepare a canonical version of

<sup>3</sup> "Islamic ideology alone gave the Arabs that outward-looking attitude which enabled them to become sufficiently united to defeat the Byzantine and Persian empires. Many of them may have been concerned chiefly with booty for themselves. But men who were *merely* raiders out for booty could not have held together as the Arabs did." W. Montgomery Watt, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Origin of Islam," *Islamic Quarterly*, 1, 1954.

the Koran, because so many "reciters" of the holy book had been killed in action and there was a danger that the full text would be lost. Was this not surely an indication of the strength of religious motives?

It is doubtless true that the astonishing success of the Arab invaders was due partly to the weakness and disunity of the civilized states which were their chief targets of attack. Byzantium and Persia had fought one another to a standstill in a war that had dragged on for twenty-five years. The Sassanid kingdom was prostrated by war-weariness, and collapsed like Russia in 1917. The Christian Empire rested on a stronger basis, and had been pulled together by Heraclius, but it was racked by religious quarrels, and the Copts and Syrians, Monophysites almost to a man, had no stomach for fighting for their Greek Orthodox masters who had persecuted their church. But against this must be set the fact that the Arabs had no superior military techniques and no tradition of military discipline. Their camels indeed gave them a great mobility, but they brought no "secret weapons" against their foes. Indeed they were woefully deficient in everything but small arms, and had at first no siege-engines with which to batter down fortified strongholds. We have no precise information of the size of their armies, but it is unlikely that they outnumbered the forces which the Byzantine Emperor and the Sassanid Shah could put into the field. Moreover, what is most surprising is not the *initial* success of the Arabs, but the continued victorious advance which carried them eastwards across the Tigris, the Oxus and the Indus and westwards all round the southern shores of the Mediterranean. They encountered the most tenacious resistance, not from the troops of civilized nations, but from nomads like themselves, such as the Berbers and the Turks. Even when internal feuds and civil wars were raging at home, the drive on the frontiers went on. Surely some tremendous inner compulsion was pushing them forward, and this can only have been supplied by Islam itself.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The most remarkable of recent investigations into the origins of Islam have been carried out by Dr. W. M. Watt in his two studies, *Muhammad in Mecca* (Oxford, 1953) and *Muhammad in Medina* (Oxford, 1956), wherein he strives to explain the Prophet's success as a response to a total social situation,



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We may therefore venture to formulate as a principle that nomad aggression is at its maximum when set in motion partly by a powerful religious impulse.

How, then, does this apply to the Mongols?

At first sight the stimulus of a religious faith, which in the case of the Arabs animated the leaders if not the rank and file, would seem to have been lacking in the Mongols. Muhammad was a prophet, Chingis only a warrior. Yet on closer inspection we find clear evidence of a very strong religious "drive" behind the Mongol conquests. The ancient religion of the Asian steppes differed in one important particular from that of the Arabian deserts. While sharing a common nature-worship with the Bedouins, the Turco-Mongolian peoples, ranging over the limitless spaces of the heartlands of Asia, developed the belief that they were destined, under *Tengri* (heaven, the sky-god), to rule the world.<sup>5</sup> As early as 584, a Turkish khagan, writing to the emperor of China, styles himself "born of the Sky, the Son of Heaven of the empire of the great Turks."<sup>6</sup> And a successor

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the new religion being specially adapted to a society changing from a nomadic to a mercantile economy. Against the charge of neo-Marxism brought against him by G.-H. Bousquet he has defended himself in the article cited above. Bousquet himself seems to play down unduly the non-religious elements, in his "Observations sur la nature et les causes de la conquête arabe," *Studia Islamica*, 6, 1956, for which he has been criticized by M. Rodinson, "The Life of Muhammad and the Sociological Problem of the Beginnings of Islam," *Diogenes*, No. 20, 1957. See Rodinson's summary of the controversy in his "Bilan des études mohammadiennes," *Revue historique*, 229, 1963.

The conquests themselves have not yet been adequately studied from the socio-religious standpoint. If and when this work is undertaken, the comparison made by Eduard Meyer in 1912 between Islam and Mormonism could perhaps be pursued further. The historical circumstances of mid-nineteenth century America prevented a great upsurge of conquest on the part of the Mormons, who could only ride forth (a new Hijra!) and colonize Utah. But the Mormon trek to the West is unthinkable without Muhammad and the Koran.

<sup>5</sup> On the ancient religion of the Asian steppes, see J.-P. Roux, "Tängri. Essai sur le ciel-dieu des peuples altaïques," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 149-150, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> P. Pelliot, "Neuf notes sur des questions d'Asie Centrale," *T'oung Pao*, 26, 1929. Cf. J.-P. Roux, "La religion des Turcs de l'Orkhon des VII<sup>e</sup> et VIII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Rev. de l'Hist. des Relig.*, 161, 1962.

a generation later proclaims on the famous Orkhon inscriptions: "When the blue Sky was created above and the black Earth below, in between man was brought into being, and my ancestors rule over the sons of men."<sup>7</sup> No doubt this politico-religious universalism owed something to the influence of China, whose emperor was also the Son of Heaven ruling by its mandate. The khagan is the divinized representative of Tengri, and military success over neighboring tribes or over the Chinese easily generated the hope and expectation that world dominion, their manifest destiny, was speedily to be accomplished by the victorious tribe or confederation.<sup>8</sup> These beliefs and concepts survived even the conversion of certain Turco-Mongolian peoples to Islam or Nestorian Christianity or Buddhism: they remained in their purest and strongest form among the Mongols proper, who in Chingis Khan's day still clung to their ancestral shamanism unaffected by contact with the higher religions.<sup>9</sup> The brilliant victories of Chingis convinced him and his people that global mastery was theirs, for so Heaven must have decreed. Their task was clearly to establish the reign of peace and justice throughout the world: resistance to them was resistance to Heaven itself and must be punished accordingly. It is impossible to doubt that this unshakable faith was a source of enormous moral strength to the Mongols. Once Chingis had shown that he could conquer, they took for granted that their day had come and that nothing could withstand them.

Chingis wrote no Koran, but he did formulate the *Yasa*, or code of law, which was first promulgated on his assumption of supreme power at the *kuriltai* of 1206 and was ever afterwards treated by his people with the veneration due a divine ordinance.<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to form a just estimate of the *Yasa*,

<sup>7</sup> V. Thomsen, *Inscriptions de l'Orkhon*, Helsingfors, 1896, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> See O. Turan, "The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turks," *Studia Islamica*, 4, 1955. The khagan told the Byzantine envoys in 568 that the spirits of his ancestors had revealed to him that it was time for his people "to invade the whole world." *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, tr. Chabot, Paris, 1905, 3, 150.

<sup>9</sup> N. Pallisen, "Die alte Religion der Mongolen," *Numen*, 3, 1956. See also the supplementary volume (London, 1927) of Howorth's *History of the Mongols*.

<sup>10</sup> On the *Yasa*, see V. A. Riasanovsky, *Fundamental Principles of Mongol*

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for no complete copy is known to exist, and only fragments have come down to us. Its provisions range from the lofty enjoinder of toleration for all creeds to details of army organization and the prescription of the death penalty for theft, adultery and in the case of a merchant, a third bankruptcy. Curious primitive superstitions about the sacred elements are reflected in severe prohibitions against urinating in water or on ashes and washing clothes in running streams. The Yasa was presumably designed to meet the needs of an expanding empire, to be superimposed on rather than to supplant customary tribal law, to help bind together the many nations now under Mongol sway. Chingis's son Jagatai was appointed the special guardian of the Yasa; copies were kept in the treasury of the Mongol princes and consulted on occasion as an oracle, and each Khan began his reign by solemnly confirming its validity. Legends gathered round it: the Armenian historian Gregory of Akner tells us that an angel appeared to Chingis in the guise of an eagle with golden feathers and recited the Yasa to him, while bidding him "rule over many countries."<sup>11</sup> One is inevitably reminded of the recitation of the Koran by Gabriel to Muhammad, and just as the Koran was supplemented by the *Hadith* or traditions of the Prophet so was the Yasa supplemented by the *bilik*, sayings or maxims of Chingis, in which the great conqueror expresses opinion, gives advice or tells stories of his life.<sup>12</sup> Clearly Chingis was something more than a brilliant soldier and outstanding chieftain to his people: he was the spokesman of Heaven, the executor of the Divine Will, perhaps even a mortal god, for his cult flourished in Mongolia down to our own day. Even the Communists have felt obliged to build a special shrine to house his supposed relics.<sup>13</sup> His Yasa achieved

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Law, Tientsin, 1937, where all the relevant texts are translated and commented on, and G. Vernadsky, "The Scope and Content of Chingis Khan's Yasa," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 3, 1938.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory of Akner, *A History of the Nation of the Archers*, tr. Blake & Frye, Harvard, 1954, c. 2.

<sup>12</sup> The surviving fragments of the *bilik* are collected in Riasanovsky, cited above.

<sup>13</sup> On the cult of Chingis, see the article by Pallisen, cited above, R. A.

widespread fame. Even the Mamluks of Egypt, the bitterest enemies of the Mongols, adopted it as the basis of their public law.<sup>14</sup>

Nowhere is this religious imperialism more strikingly displayed than in the orders of submission dispatched by the Great Khans to the sovereigns of Europe.<sup>15</sup> These astonishing documents usually began with: "We by the power of the Eternal Heaven (*Mongke tengri*), Supreme Khan of the great Mongol nation, our order..." Guyuk, in his letter of 1246 answering Innocent IV's complaint that the Mongol had wantonly attacked Christian nations and committed dreadful atrocities, told the pope: "I do not understand these words of yours. The Eternal Heaven has slain and annihilated these lands and peoples, because they have neither adhered to Chingis Khan nor to the Khagan, both of whom have been sent to make known Heaven's command." Mongke haughtily warned Louis IX in 1254: "In Heaven there is only one Eternal Sky, on Earth there is only one Lord, Chingis Khan, the Son of Heaven," and he went on: "When by the power of the Eternal Heaven the whole world from the rising of the sun to the setting shall be at one in joy and peace, then it will be made clear what we are going to do: if when you have

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Rupen, "Mongolian Nationalism," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 45, 1958; C. R. Bawden, "Some Recent Work in Mongolian Studies," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, 1960, and the reports of modern travelers in Mongolia, e.g. Henning Haslund, *Mongolian Journey*, Eng. tr. 1949, p. 119.

<sup>14</sup> A. N. Poliak, "The Influence of Chingis Khan's *Yasa* upon the General Organization of the Mamluk State," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies*, 1941.

<sup>15</sup> The imperial edicts and letters of the Mongol Khans have been closely scrutinized since Abel-Rémusat published his great pioneer study, "Les relations politiques des princes chrétiens avec les empereurs mongols," in the *Mémoires* of the French Academy of Inscriptions, tom. 6 & 7, 1822-24. See P. Pelliot, "Les Mongols et la Papauté," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien*, 23, 24, 1922-24; W. Korwicz, "Formules initiales des documents mongols aux XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 10, 1934; and E. Voegelin, "The Mongol Orders of Submission to the European Powers," *Byzantion*, 15, 1941. The most accessible and accurate translations are in C. Dawson (ed.), *The Mongol Mission*, London, 1955. The text of the Mongol demand for surrender addressed to the Mamluks of Egypt by Hulegu in 1260 is given in Maqrizi, tr. Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans Mamelouks*, Paris, 1837, 1, 101.

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understood the decree of the Eternal Heaven, you are unwilling to pay attention and believe it, saying, 'Our country is far away, our mountains are mighty, our sea is vast,' and in this confidence you bring an army against us, we know what we can do. He who made easy what was difficult and near what was far off, the Eternal Heaven, knows." The conviction that the Divine Sky was fighting for them and that they had a mission to unify mankind and bring peace and order to the world was one of the strongest forces urging the Mongols on to global conquest.<sup>16</sup>

We may now turn to a second point: nomad conquerors never establish a durable political order unless they have previously been in touch with civilized societies and are intelligent enough to keep the traditional machinery of administration running in the lands which they occupy.

Neither the Arabs nor the Mongols were savages living in remote isolation. Arabia had been subjected to external influences since the days of the Assyrians: in the Yemen the kingdoms of Saba (Sheba, later Himyar) Ma'in, Qataban, etc. enjoyed a high degree of prosperity because of the region's natural fertility and its position athwart what was then one of the main highways of international trade, and on the northern border kingdoms like those of Ghassan and Hira arose under the protection respectively of the Romans and Persians, and through them some knowledge of Greek and Iranian culture filtered through to the oases of the interior. Jewish and Christian communities were established in most of the main centers of Arab life. Islam grew up not in the deserts but in the towns, and the men of Mecca and Medina were traders and businessmen who knew the value of records and good administration. Omar, the second Caliph, was mainly responsible during his ten years' rule (634-644) for laying down the principles on which Syria, Iraq and Egypt were to be governed: the officials of the old regime were encouraged to stay at their posts, the natives were guaranteed continued possession of their lands, houses, shops and businesses and allowed to follow their ancient laws and customs, and Arab

<sup>16</sup> W. Kotwicz, "Les Mongols, promoteurs de l'idée de paix universelle," *Rocznik Orient*, 16, 1950. For Tengri as a war god, see the article by Roux cited in note 5.

tribesmen were forbidden to acquire property outside Arabia.<sup>17</sup> Full toleration was extended to Jews and all sects of Christians. Governmental ordinances were published in the local tongues: not till fifty years later, in the reign of Abd al-Malik (685-705), did Arabic become the official language of the Caliphate. Thus once the initial fighting was over, the Arab Empire came into being with the minimum of disturbance, and the conquerors, whose leaders were far from unlettered, learnt from their subjects the arts of civilized administration.

The Mongols were, it is true, farther removed than the Arabs from the centers of civilization. Their home lay in the relatively remote upper Onon Basin; they had no towns, nothing comparable to Mecca or Medina or Ma'rib, and no written literature or even oral poetry as rich as that produced in sixth-century Arabia. It is a mark of the genius of Chingis that he realized the intellectual poverty of his nation and the necessity of borrowing heavily from his more advanced neighbors. For steppe society was not all of a piece: some tribes were primitive hunters, some pastoral nomads, some combined livestock breeding with non-irrigated agriculture, and a few led a semi-commercial life in small towns enclosed by mud walls.<sup>18</sup> The most advanced were the Uighurs,<sup>19</sup> a Turkish-speaking people who had once inhabited Kara-korum in Mongolia and had later been forced to migrate to the Altai country, where a place named Bish-balik ("Five Towns"), probably in the Chu Valley, became the center of their power. Here, near the famous Silk Road, they were exposed to the many influences emanating from Persia, India and China, and to the preaching of Manichaen, Buddhist and Nestorian missionaries, all of whom made converts among them. Caught up in the trading activities of the region, they were obliged to learn writing, and they provided themselves with an alphabet derived apparently from Soghdian. The Uighur script

<sup>17</sup> See the article "Omar b. al-Khaṭṭāb" in the *Enc. of Islam*, and the references cited therein.

<sup>18</sup> For the different "layers" of steppe society, see Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, 2nd ed., Boston, 1951, part 1.

<sup>19</sup> See G. Vernadsky, "Notes on the History of the Uighurs," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 56, 1936.

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became widely diffused over the steppe, and Chingis, acquainting himself with it, resolved to employ it for his own language.<sup>20</sup> An Uighur official, T'a-t'a-tung'a, was charged with the task of creating an imperial chancery, instructing young Mongol princes in the use of the script, and publishing the Khan's decrees in the new written Mongolian. Chingis sought talent wherever he could find it; he was wholly destitute of race-prejudice, and his successors followed his example of employing generals, administrators, officials and advisers from men of all countries which the Mongol arms subdued. One of the luckiest of his "finds" was Ch'u ts'ai, a member of the Khitan dynasty of North China which the Mongols overthrew. Chingis took him into his service, and allowed the shrewd and brilliant civil servant to persuade him not to massacre the urban population of China and turn the country into pasture. This tamer of Mongol ferocity showed his master that war and conquest would be of no avail if the subjugated lands were not properly and efficiently administered and that regular taxation was better than indiscriminate plunder. He repeated this lesson to Chingis's successor Ogedei, telling him: "The Empire was created on horseback, but it won't be governed on horseback."<sup>21</sup>

None the less, the Khans were perhaps less successful than the Caliphs in building up an efficient civil service to run the Empire, precisely because they were products of a more barbarous and backward society.<sup>22</sup> The Caliphs were not Bedouin shaikhs,

<sup>20</sup> P. Pelliot, "Les systèmes d'écriture en usage chez les anciens Mongols," *Asia Major*, 2, 1925.

<sup>21</sup> See the biographies of these persons collected from the Chinese sources in Abel-Rémusat, *Nouveaux Mélanges Asiatiques*, Paris, 2, 1829.

<sup>22</sup> It may be noted here that the social and economic background of the Mongol conquests still awaits detailed investigation. The first serious studies were made by the great Russian orientalists of the last generation, V. V. Barthold and B. J. Vladimirtsov. As early as 1896 Barthold detected a class conflict in late twelfth century Mongolia between the nomad aristocracy (to which Chingis belonged) and the ordinary tribesmen, and saw in Jamuka, the chief of the Borjigin clan, the friend and later the rival and victim of Chingis, a champion of democracy against the nobles. See his *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, Leiden, 1, 1956, Eng. tr. p. 32. Vladimirtsov, while not accepting this, argued in his life of Chingis (Eng. tr. 1930) and his study of Mongol society (Fr. tr. *Le régime social des Mongols*, 1948) that the old clan community was

but townsmen from the commercial aristocracy of Mecca: the Khans were nomad tribal chiefs writ large, who revelled in the freedom of the boundless steppes and thought of towns as prisons. Indeed, the massacre and destruction the Mongols perpetrated in city after city (in Nishapur in 1221, we are told, not only men, women and children but the very cats and dogs in the streets were slaughtered),<sup>23</sup> exercises in genocide to which no parallel is to be found in the Arab conquests, may possibly be ascribed, not so much to a cold and callous military design to terrorize their foes into submission, as to a blind unreasoning fear and hatred of urban civilization. Only reluctantly did they come to realize the necessity of a fixed capital, a centralized administration for their rapidly expanding imperial domain, and chose for that purpose the old settlement of Kara-korum, a "city" by courtesy, whose crude building of mud and plaster excited the surprise and contempt of envoys and visitors from civilized states; the Flemish Franciscan, William of Rubruck; scornfully pronouncing it inferior to the Paris suburb of St. Denis! The Mongol conquests proceeded by two stages, the first resulting in the unification of the Eurasian steppe from Manchuria to Hungary (this was relatively easy, and had been largely achieved once before, by the Turks in the sixth century), the second in the more difficult and protracted subjugation of old, settled territorial states like China and Persia. The former could be run by a primitive civil service staffed by clerks and secretaries from the Uighurs and other Turco-Mongolian peoples who were not

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being broken up and replaced by what he called "feudal nomadism." This interpretation was for a time generally accepted by Soviet historians, e.g. Grekof and Yakubovsky in their study of the Golden Horde (Fr. tr. *La Horde d'Or*, 1939), but has been sharply attacked by L. Krader, "Feudalism and the Tartar Policy of the Middle Ages," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1, 1958, who points out the total absence of a lord-serf relationship among the Mongols, and according to A. M. Belenitsky, "Les Mongols et l'Asie Centrale," *Journal of World History*, 5, 1960, has now been abandoned by Soviet scholars themselves, who have decided that a nomad economy cannot be purely feudal and define the social relations of thirteenth century Mongolia as "semi-feudal, semi-patriarchal." Cf. Owen Lattimore, "The Social History of Mongol Nomadism," in *Historians of China and Japan* (ed. Beasley & Pulleyblank), London, 1961.

<sup>23</sup> D'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols*, The Hague, 1834, 1, 290.



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wholly unlettered: the government and exploitation of the latter demanded a highly trained and educated bureaucracy with an expertise the Mongol did not possess or understand. The Khans came to feel themselves in a painful dilemma. They despised city-dwellers and held aloof from them, fearing that the virile and martial qualities of their people would be lost in the enervating luxury of wealthy towns.<sup>24</sup> But how could these lands be properly governed and taxed without putting power back into the hands of the old ruling class? A partial solution was found in the lavish employment of foreigners. Even Kubilai, who was credited with a deep admiration for Chinese culture, was careful to exclude the old mandarin class from all but subordinate office,<sup>25</sup> and China during his reign was run by Muslims from the Arab and Persian lands, Nestorian Christians from Turkish-speaking races, and Europeans like the Polos.<sup>26</sup> In Persia the native officials could not be so easily dispensed with, and members of old bureaucratic families like Juwaini and Rashid al-Din Fadl-allah served the Il-khans, but even here non-Persian Christians, Jews and Buddhists were given high ministerial rank wherever possible.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Chingis was alleged to have warned his people against this. "After us the descendants of our clan will wear gold-embroidered garments, eat rich and sweet food, ride fine horses, and embrace beautiful women, but they will not say they owe all this to their fathers and they will forget us and those great times." Quoted from the *bilik* in Riasanovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>25</sup> "Il ne plaça jamais aucun Chinois dans le ministère, et il n'eut pas pour ministres d'état que des étrangers qu'il sût choisir avec discernement... Plusieurs Chinois, gens de lettres et très-habiles qui vivoient à la cour de Houpilai-han (*sic*), pouvoient rendre à ce prince les plus grands services dans le gouvernement de ses états s'ils en eussent été chargés, mais on ne leur confia que des emplois subalternes." De Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, tom. 9, Paris, 1779, p. 460, translating the annals of the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. A good critical study of the life and reign of Kubilai is much to be desired. Odd that, despite Marco Polo (and Coleridge!), no biography of this great ruler appears to exist in any European language.

<sup>26</sup> Though Marco Polo governed a Chinese city for three years, he seems to have been ignorant of the Chinese language. Yule-Cordier, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, London, 1903, 1, 29, note.

<sup>27</sup> For Mongol rule in Persia, see B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran*, 2nd. ed. Berlin, 1955, and Ann S. K. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, London, 1953, c. 4. The most valuable contemporary sources are Juwaini, *tr.*

In consequence the Mongols remained strangers in these lands, hated alien conquerors, an army of occupation, putting down no roots, and winning no loyalty. It is significant that their rule was much more short-lived in civilized countries than in the steppe lands. The Khanate of Persia disappeared in 1335, only eighty years after Hulagu's invasion of 1255, and the Mongols were driven from China by the nationalist Ming uprising in 1368, only ninety years after Kubilai had destroyed the Sung dynasty in 1279. But the Golden Horde, which ruled the steppes of south Russia from its headquarters on the lower Volga, survived until 1480, and the descendants of Chingis's son Jagatai continued to reign over what is now Turkestan till the second half of the seventeenth century.

The questions arise here: why was the collapse of the huge Mongol Empire much more rapid than that of the Caliphate, and why did the conquests of Chingis and his successors not call into existence a great Mongolic civilization comparable to the brilliant Arabic civilization which arose a century or so after the expansion of Islam?

The rise of the Mongol power had in many respects paralleled that of the Arab: in each case, the aggressor was helped by the weakness and disunity of his foes. The rottenness of the Sassanid Empire had its counterpart in the rottenness of the Khwarazmian Empire. The bitter strife between Orthodox and Monophysite in the Byzantine world was matched by the Sunni-Shi'ite feud in Islam and the violent contest between the Sultan Muhammad and the Caliph Nasir on the eve of the Mongol invasion. The political anarchy which delivered Russia into Mongol hands resembles the confusion and fecklessness which allowed the Arabs to overturn the Visigothic kingdom in Spain in a single battle. With the long exhausting war between Byzantium and Persia may be compared the internal dissensions of China, divided between the Kin and the Sung, which enabled the Mongols to play off one against the other and in the end to destroy both. But here the parallel ends. The Arab Empire remained a going

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Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror*, 2 vols. Manchester, 1958, and Rashid al-Din, tr. Quatremère, *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse*, Paris, 1836.

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concern for two hundred years, at least until the death of Harun al-Rashid in 809: the Mongol broke up in less than a century, and Kubilai, the last of the Great Khans, was only the fifth to hold that rank. It is, of course, easy to point in explanation to the sheer size and unwieldiness of the Mongol realm, and to the split in the ruling family on the occasion of the election of Mongke or Mangu as Great Khan in 1251, when the house of Tuli supplanted that of Ogedei, a change comparable in some ways to the overthrow of the Omayyads by the Abbasids in the revolution of 750. But clearly the matter goes deeper. It was more even than the trouble already alluded to, the difficulty a ruling class of inexperienced and untutored nomads must find in maintaining political control over sophisticated sedentary societies. The root of the matter was the irresistible attraction which civilizations exert on nomads when the latter are encamped among them, combined with the fact that the Mongols did not possess a "higher" religion of universal appeal and their subjects did.

The great civilizations which developed in the valleys of the Hwangho and Yang-tse and in the Iranian plateau radiated, so to speak, waves of influence which spread into the steppelands of Central Asia along the commercial routes running north and south of the Tarim Basin. Chinese culture in a diluted form, and occasionally Chinese political control, penetrated as far west as Kashgar and Yarkand: Persian influences spread beyond the Oxus and Jaxartes, and the regions now known as Turkestan were occupied for centuries by peoples of Iranian speech. When the Turks entered history in the sixth century and moved rapidly westwards as far as the Crimea, they soon experienced the rival "pulls" of China and Iran, and the division between "Eastern Turks" and "Western Turks," which wrecked the strength and unity of their empire, reflects this cultural cleavage and foreshadows the similar cleavage among the Mongols. Unlike the early Turks, whose rule was confined to the steppes, the Mongols completely subjugated China and Persia, and were in consequence much more exposed to the subtle spell of these distinctive civilizations. Kubilai, the last of the Great Khans, was also the first Mongol Emperor of China, who took the

decisive step of abandoning Kara-korum in Mongolia and transferring the center of empire to Khan-balik (Cambaluc, modern Peking). His brother and rival, Arik-boga, acting whether he consciously wished to or not as the representative of the old conservative Mongol traditionalism, set himself up as Great Khan at Kara-korum: his defeat by Kubilai in 1264 marked the victory of the "civilizers" over the "barbarians." Kubilai and his party however much they might distrust the Chinese scholar-gentry and hold them at arm's length, grew more and more receptive to Chinese manners, customs, ideas, art and ideology and posed as patrons of Chinese culture.<sup>28</sup> In the West, Persia took captive her Mongol conquerors, as she had done the Arabs: the Il-khans finished up, like the Arab Caliphs, as passable imitations of the Sassanid Shahs. But the Sinised Mongol and the Iranized Mongols entered into two totally different cultural traditions and spiritually drifted further and further apart. Moreover, the Mongol leadership itself was divided over this aping of foreign manners: the old-fashioned repudiated it as a betrayal of the national past.

Yet something like this had happened to the Arabs, who had entered into the heritage of Greek and Persian culture and whose "conversion" to civilization had been followed by a great florescence of intellectual and artistic life, expressed through the medium of the Arabic language. Nothing of the kind took place in the case of the Mongols, who found themselves involved in a fateful struggle for the soul of Asia on the part of the three

<sup>28</sup> The literature on Mongol China in European languages is depressingly meagre. The only important monograph in English is H. F. Schurmann, *Economic Structure of the Yüan Dynasty*, Camb., Mass. 1956, a translation of and commentary on two chapters on economic and financial matters in the *Yüan shih*, the official history of the dynasty. Some idea of social conditions in China under Mongol rule may be gathered from the notebooks and jottings of one Yang yü, a scholar official who died in 1361, translated by H. Franke as *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Chinas unter der Mongolenherrschaft*, Wiesbaden, 1956. The civil service examinations in the Confucian classics were revived in 1313; see H. Franke, "Could the Mongol Emperors read and write Chinese?" *Asia Major*, new series, 1953. Some useful indications of the way Mongol policies and practices in China had been anticipated by earlier nomad invaders, notably the Ch'i-tan (Liao), are given in K. A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, "History of Chinese Society, Liao 907-1125," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 36, Philadelphia, 1949, especially the "general introduction," pp. 1-35.

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great world religions—Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>29</sup> The Mongol leadership was at the outset committed to none of them, and unlike the Arabs, it had not recently acquired a prophet, a sacred book and a firm conviction of the possession of all truth. It was pulled this way and that, and had to grapple with issues the Arabs never had to face.

Notwithstanding the powerful religious drive behind the Mongols, their primitive paganism was bound to be eroded by contact with the higher faiths, of which before the conquests of Chingis they had known little or nothing. Buddhism was the most widespread religion of China and Eastern Asia generally; it had converted a large number of the Uighur Turks, and was not unknown in Transoxiana and Eastern Persia. Islam had won over most of the West Turkish peoples as far east as Kashgar and as far north as the Bulgars of the middle Volga, but had never penetrated into Mongolia. Christianity in its Nestorian form had been carried into the heart of Asia, as far east as Manchuria, and though expelled from China in 845, had converted the Keraites,<sup>30</sup> Naimans and Onguts, tribes living to the south-west of the Mongols, had captured a portion of the Uighurs, and was well organized from its bases in Persia and Iraq.<sup>31</sup> From the 1240s onwards the Nestorians were joined by intrepid missionaries from Latin Christendom, some of whom, like John of Plan Carpini, William of Rubruck and Friar Odoric, have left invaluable descriptions of their travels and of conditions at the Mongol court.<sup>32</sup> The curiosity of the Mongols was aroused as they learnt

<sup>29</sup> Much material relating to the religious situation in Central Asia in the Mongol age is contained in E. Bretschneider, *Medieval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources*, 2 vols., London, 1888, and Yule-Cordier, *Cathay & the Way Thither*, Hakluyt Society, 4 vols., London, 1913-16.

<sup>30</sup> On this important Christian people, whose chief was almost certainly the original "Prester John," see D. M. Dunlop, "The Keraites," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 11, 1943-46.

<sup>31</sup> For the Nestorian Church in Asia, see P. Pelliot, "Chrétiens d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême-Orient," *T'oung Pao*, 15, 1914; Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kublai Khan*, London, 1928; A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before 1550*, London, 1930 (a most valuable collection of source-material); and L. E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia*, Cambridge, 1933.

<sup>32</sup> The narratives of John of Plan Carpini and William of Rubruck are

more of these competing faiths. Chingis himself sought wisdom from a holy Taoist monk of high repute, Ch'ang Ch'un, who was summoned to attend him on his great Western campaign in 1219-24, and was greeted with the words: "Sainted man, you have come from a great distance. Have you a medicine of immortality?"<sup>33</sup> Chinkai, a Nestorian Kerait, was confidential adviser to Chingis and his successors Ogedei and Guyuk. Mongke, who received William of Rubruck and other Western envoys, was fond of listening to religious debates, and once remarked that these different creeds were like the fingers of the hand, in that they were essentially sprung from the same base.<sup>34</sup> Kara-korum in those days was filled with monks and priests, lamas and bonzes, all cherishing the hope that this huge uncommitted Empire would be won to their particular faith. For a time Christian expectations ran high. The Mongol ruling family married into Turkish Christian clans: Tuli had a Nestorian Kerait wife, Hulegu's mother and wife were both Christians, and Mongke and Kubilai had Christian mothers. Guyuk was reported to have been baptized, and Sartak, the son of Batu, the conqueror of Russia, was pretty certainly a Christian. Hulegu was strongly anti-Muslim; he horrified Islam by sacking Baghdad in 1258 and killing the last Caliph, and when his attempt to conquer Mamluk Egypt came to grief at Ain Jalut in 1260, he and his successors, the Il-khans of Persia, sought an alliance with the Crusaders and the Western powers against the Muslims, promising to help the West recover Jerusalem and hinting that they might turn Christian. Had they done so, the history of the world would indeed have been changed. But in the end the Mongols in the east turned Buddhist and those in the West Muslim. Christianity suffered a crushing defeat, and faded out of Asia.

The reasons for these momentous decisions are not far to seek. When the conquests were over, the Khans had to keep

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available in the Hakluyt series, tr. W. W. Rockhill, London, 1900, that of Friar Odoric in *Cathay & the Way Thither*, vol. 2, 1913.

<sup>33</sup> See the account of this interview in A. Waley, *Ch'ang Ch'un, Travels of an Alchemist*, London, 1931.

<sup>34</sup> William of Rubruck, tr. Rockhill, p. 235.

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them, and this could best be done by identifying themselves as far as possible with their subjects' beliefs and customs. They were far from popular as it was, and it would be folly to be anti-Muslim in Persia or anti-Buddhist in China.<sup>35</sup> Kubilai, while maintaining the old Mongol policy of tolerating all cults, showed more and more favor to the Buddhists. Marco Polo (or rather Ramusio) tells us that when his father and uncle urged him to adopt Christianity, he replied in effect that he could not risk the opposition of his nobles and "other people who are not attached to the faith of Christ."<sup>36</sup> Hulegu's great-grandson Ghazan accepted Islam in 1295, and followed up his conversion by sharp measures against Christians, Jews and Buddhists.<sup>37</sup> There was no great civilized Christian state in Asia, so the Mongols doubtless felt they had no choice save between Buddhism and Islam. But by so choosing, the one in China, the other in Persia, they hastened the disruption of their vast realm.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> The unpopularity of Mongol rule in China and Persia was accentuated by the extortion and corruption of their fiscal agents. The claim of Soviet historians that the peasant masses were reduced to serfdom under the Khan would seem to be substantiated at least as far as Persia is concerned. See the evidence collected by Lambton, *op. cit.*, who notes that owing to the Mongol policy of exempting clergy and religious officials of every creed from taxation, the *qadis* prospered, merged with the landlord class, and ceased to fill their former role as mediators between the people and the government. For fiscal maladministration in Mongol China, see de Mailla, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-461 (reign of Kubilai). For peasant revolts in the ex-Sung provinces, see Schurmann, *Economic Structure*, and his article, "Mongol Tributary Practices," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 19, 1956.

<sup>36</sup> Yule-Cordier, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, 1, pp. 348-349, note.

<sup>37</sup> The conversion of the Mongol leadership in Persia to Islam was clearly prompted by the desire to win popular support against the Mamluks of Egypt (who since Ain Jalut had posed as champions of Islam against the wicked "pagans" who had destroyed the Caliphate) and the Golden Horde, the Il-Khans' rivals for the domination of the western half of the Mongol Empire.

<sup>38</sup> It may be asked why the Golden Horde did not turn Christian and adopt Byzantine-Slav culture, holding sway as it did over Orthodox Russia? To this it may be replied that Russia was a marginal land so far as the Horde was concerned, and the heart of the khanate (the lower Volga) was in a Turkish-speaking region, already partly Islamized before the Mongol invasion. Even so, permanent conversion to Islam was delayed here longer than elsewhere in the Mongol West. Batu's son Sartak is said to have been baptized, and though his uncle Berke, who succeeded him in 1257, was strongly pro-Muslim, the ruling house was not finally converted to Islam till the reign of Ozbeg (1312-1340). The close relationship

The Mongols in East and West thus adopted a ready-made culture, and created nothing for themselves. As Pushkin remarked: "The Tatars had nothing in common with the Moors. If they conquered Russia, they gave us neither algebra nor Aristotle!" At first there were signs that a respectable native Mongol literature might develop: the famous *Secret History*, the epic of the Mongol nation, compiled about 1250 or later, is a vigorous and spirited blend of fact and legend not unlike the best of the Icelandic sagas.<sup>39</sup> But this remained an isolated phenomenon, and whereas Arabic grew into a noble international language of science and philosophy as well as of pure literature, Mongolic never really emerged from the shadows to become anything more than the vehicle for the propagation of folktales.<sup>40</sup> One obvious reason for the contrast was the fact that Arabic, since the publication of the Koran, was for millions of men a sacred tongue, the one chosen by God for his final revelation to humankind, and was read and recited in the original wherever Islam spread. Under the Caliphs, Greek and Syriac, Pahlawi and Coptic, dwindled to be the speech of small minorities, and Arabic rose to a position of unchallenged supremacy, never to be replaced, so long as Islam might last, as the *lingua prima* of Muslims. But there was no Mongolic Koran or Bible or Gita or Avesta, and even the *Yasa* had to be translated into the languages of the Great Khan's subjects.

Not only did Mongolic possess no religious aura, it was the speech of a far from numerous people. It has been calculated (on not very precise data, admittedly) that the population of Mongolia in Chingis's day was no more than a million or so,

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between the Horde and Mamluk Egypt, based on common hostility to the Il-Khans of Persia, almost certainly tipped the balance against Christianity. See R. Grousset, *L'Empire des Steppes*, 4th. ed., Paris, 1952, pp. 470-483.

<sup>39</sup> See Arthur Waley's translation, *The Secret History of the Mongols and Other Pieces*, London, 1963. Professor Cleaves of Harvard is preparing a new critical edition and translation.

<sup>40</sup> The conversion of the Mongols to Lamaist Buddhism in the late sixteenth century produced a faint literary renaissance, and a few mediocre chronicles were composed in the next age. See C. Z. Zamcarano, "The Mongol Chronicles of the Seventeenth Century," *Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen*, Wiesbaden, 3, 1955.



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and Rashid al-Din tells us that at the time of the conqueror's death in 1227 the Mongol Army numbered 129,000 men. These are not high figures, and they indicate, not only what a heavy drain of Mongol manpower the conquests imposed, but also how the Mongols were, so to speak, swallowed up in their own creation. The Mongol imperial expansion was not a migration of people seeking fresh territories to settle, but a resolute bid by Chingis to seize the empire of the steppes at a time most favorable to the execution of such a design, the military machine he built being of such excellent construction that it went on operating almost automatically after his death. Whereas it was decades before the Caliphs drafted Berbers, Khurasanians and Turks into the Arab armies, Chingis was prepared at an early stage to recruit Keraites, Naimans, Uighurs, Alans, Tanguts and other non-Mongol tribes into his forces, nor did a man need to be of Mongol birth to reach the highest command.<sup>41</sup> In the end the army of the Khans was more Turkish than Mongol in composition, and the vast conquests were not accompanied by large-scale Mongol settlement. The Mongols were too few in number to impose their language on their Empire, and it is no more widely diffused today than it was before the time of Chingis. Little trace of Mongol appears to survive in Persia or Russia or any other land which once owed allegiance to the Great Khans.<sup>42</sup> Even at the height of their imperial greatness, the language most commonly employed in their chancery was not Mongol but Persian, which for a time was a kind of *lingua franca* throughout Asia and even acted as link between China and the West.<sup>43</sup>

Barthold remarked that "the policy of reconciling two incompatible things—nomadic life and intellectual culture—was

<sup>41</sup> See H. Desmond Martin, "The Mongol Army," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1943.

<sup>42</sup> See, however the remarks on Mongol and Turkish loan-words in Persian in G. Doerfer, "Prolegomena zu einer Untersuchung der altaischen Lehnwörter im Neupersischen," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 5, 1959-60.

<sup>43</sup> P. Pelliot. "Notes sur l'histoire de la Horde d'Or," *Œuvres posthumes*, 1, Paris, 1949, pp. 164-165. Guyuk's letter to Innocent IV in 1246 was written in Persian, the original being found in the Vatican archives in 1920. Marco Polo used Persian in China, but not Chinese! Persian continued to be studied in China even under the Ming dynasty.

the weakest spot in Chingis Khan's system, and the principal cause of its fall."<sup>44</sup> In the case of the Arabs, the nomadic element was kept under fair control by the urbanized leaders (after the conquests the turbulent Bedouin soldiery were corralled in camp-cities like Basra, Kufa, Fustat and Kairawan), the new religion of Islam supplied not only a driving force but a language already divinized in the eyes of the faithful, the Arab race and speech was spread over a wide area from Khurasan to Spain,<sup>45</sup> and the ancient civilizations of Persia and the Greco-Roman world began to exert their influence on Muslim society largely through the medium of the Nestorians and other Syriac-speaking Christians. The possession of Islam, a thing purely Arab in origin, immunized the Arab invaders against the creeds of their more civilized subjects.

The Mongols were in a different position. Their leader, a genius of war, built a gigantic empire, but was after all the nomad chief of nomads. The religion of the steppes, the cult of the sky-god, was a powerful stimulus to conquest, but the Mongols nonetheless had no prophet and no Koran, and were thus in a sense at the mercy of the "higher religions." A small nation, they were soon hopelessly outnumbered in their own empire, made no permanent settlements outside their original homelands, and within a century or so retreated back to their native pastures. Nothing that they possessed could serve as an effective nucleus for the building of a new civilization, nothing like Islam was there to provide the peculiar flavor or distinctive language of a higher culture. The Nestorians, who had helped to educate the Arabs, were but poorly equipped to educate the Mongols, for they themselves had suffered a cultural decline in the intervening centuries, were more scattered and isolated and removed from the original sources of their intellectual life.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, Eng. tr. 1958, p. 461.

<sup>45</sup> On the spread of the Arabic language, see A. N. Poliak, "L'Arabisation de l'Orient sémitique," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 12, 1938.

<sup>46</sup> William of Rubruck, who strikes one as an intelligent and relatively unprejudiced observer, gives a highly unfavorable account of the Nestorian clergy he met at Kara-korum whom he portrays as ignorant and immoral. On the other

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The contrast cannot be more strongly pointed than by considering the case of Persia, which was conquered both by the Arabs and the Mongols. The Arab conquest transformed the whole life and ethos of Iran, a clean break was made with the Sassanid and Zoroastrian past, the nation began its history afresh, its ancient language was submerged and when it later revived was choked with Arabic words which modern patriotism has scarcely managed wholly to expel. The Mongol conquest roared over Persia like a hurricane, yet when it had passed, the character of the nation had undergone little change. The Persians had accepted the Arab religion, but the Mongols accepted the Persian religion. Cultural continuity was maintained, despite enormous physical damage, and the Persian language was not only almost unaffected by Mongol but actually rose to be virtually the official language of the Mongol Empire.

In the light of these considerations, it is perhaps permissible to draw these conclusions:

1. Pure nomadism could never hold an empire.
2. Successful nomad imperialism required an ideology, i.e. the leadership had to be impelled by something more than a tribal chief's desire for plunder and booty, had to possess some non-material aim or goal. The early Turks and the Mongols both had the *idea* of world dominion and the *ideal* of universal peace and justice under their rule.
3. To become empire builders, as distinct from mere raiders, the nomad leadership had to be previously in contact with peoples of a higher culture, to be aware, however vaguely, of the problems of civil administration as well as of military conquest, and be able to draw on educated personnel outside its own ranks to run the occupied territories.
4. Conquest of a sedentary society by nomads most often resulted in the latter being ultimately absorbed in that society and losing their language and national identity. This was due to the fewness of the invaders and the strong "pull" a sophisticated

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hand, the life of the Nestorian missionary Rabban Sauma (Eng. tr. Wallis Budge, *The Monks of Kublai Khan*), who visited Europe at the close of the thirteenth century, affords a brighter picture of his community. A good critical study of Nestorianism in medieval Asia is urgently needed.

society commonly exerts on an unlettered one. The Hun language vanished completely. The Bulgarians were speaking Slavonic a few generations after crossing the Danube in 679. The Mongols of the Golden Horde, a small ruling class dominating Turkish peoples, became rapidly Turkicized. If the leaders tried to prevent absorption by a policy of segregation, including a ban on marriage between the invaders and the natives, the conquerors remained a mere army of occupation and were finally thrown out leaving scarcely a trace of their presence behind them. The Mongols in the end "evacuated" China as the Goths did Italy.

5. Nomad religion was usually of a primitive type, with a rudimentary organization and no written sacred literature. Hence it had no appeal to more advanced peoples. Nomads were by contrast often impressed by the appurtenances of the higher religions (temples, priesthods, sacred books), and barbarian conquerors commonly embraced the faith of their subjects. Thus in Europe the Germans, Vikings and Magyars turned Christian, the Mongols in the East adopted Buddhism, and those in the West, Islam.

6. The strongest basis for nomad imperial power was, as Ibn Khaldun noted,<sup>47</sup> a "higher" religion which taught them unity and restraint. Of all the nomad conquerors, only the Arabs possessed such a thing. They received a prophet and a holy book *before* they set out on their conquests; they entered the lands of their civilized neighbors with a full conviction of spiritual superiority, and they never forgot that Arabic, being the language in which God had revealed himself to man, was immeasurably above the speech of Greeks and Persians and Hindus. Mongol had no such advantage. The Arabs were under no temptation to embrace religious faiths which they knew were but caricatures of their own, and wherever they went, the holy language of the Koran went with them. Hence it became possible to build an Arabic civilization, but not a Mongol one.

<sup>47</sup> See the section in Ibn Khaldun's *Muquaddimah* (Eng. tr. London, 1958, vol. 1, pp. 305-306) entitled: "Arabs can obtain royal authority only by making use of some religious colouring, such as prophecy or sainthood, or some great religious event in general."



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**5**  
**THE ARAB EXPANSION:**  
**THE MILITARY PROBLEM**  
*Marius Canard*

[37] The Arab expansion, the rapidity and the relative ease with which the Arabs accomplished their conquests and extended their domination from Central Asia to the Atlantic, are still an astonishing phenomenon. The fact that, recently and barely unified by Islam, they were capable of taking control of Palestine and Syria, conquering Persia, continuing in their progress towards East and West, defeating the forces of imperial powers such as Byzantium, Sasanid Persia, the Visigoth kingdom, subjecting numerous populations to their dominion when they did not accept Islam or integrating them into their new state when they adopted it – all of this could seem difficult to explain. The Arabs themselves were perhaps surprised, and their relatively easy successes were undoubtedly one of the reasons why many Muslims tended to attribute them to the intrinsic worth and the superiority of the new religion, the religion of Allah, and were convinced that it had particular strengths and qualities, by virtue of which it was destined one day or another to be extended over the whole of the world and to supplant all other religions.

Their expansion had far-reaching consequences. Persia and North Africa became Muslim, [38] and in Egypt only a minority of Christians remained. The Arabs were expelled, not without difficulty but quite rapidly, from the South of France, Italy and Sicily in the Eleventh Century, from southern Spain not until the Fifteenth.

The principal stages in the progress of the Arabs in the Levant and in the West were as follows:

- 634. Sack of Palestine.
- 636. Battle of the Yarmūk which decides the fate of Damascus and of Syria.
- 637. Battle of Qādisiyya which decides the fate of Lower Mesopotamia and of Persia.
- 640. Battle of Nehavend, which opens the route into Central Asia for the Arabs and marks the end of the Sasanid Empire.
- 639. Entry of ‘Amr b. ‘Āṣ into Egypt.

- 641. Seizure of Babylon (Egypt).
- 642. Evacuation of Alexandria by the Byzantines.
- 645. Loss and recovery of Alexandria.
- 647. The Patrice Gregory is defeated at Suffetula (Sbeitla) in Tunisia, by 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr.
- 649. Start of the maritime war, with Mu'āwiya governor of Syria for the caliph 'Uthmān.
- 655. First major naval victory of the Arabs (Battle of the Māts).
- 670. After the crisis of the caliphate, 'Uqba b. Nāfir takes control of Ifrīqiya (Tunisia) and founds Kairouan.
- 675. First maritime raids from Egypt and Tripolitania against Sicily and the coast of North Africa.
- 681. The famous march of 'Uqba as far as Tangier and the Atlantic.
- 683. The disaster suffered by 'Uqba on the return journey.
- 695. Capture of Carthage by Ḥasan b. al-Nu'mān, and its recovery by the Byzantine fleet.
- [39] 698. Definitive expulsion of the Greeks of Carthage by Ḥasan b. al-Nu'mān.
- 700–701? Death of the Kāhina and end of Berber independence.
- 706? Subjugation of the Maghrib by Mūsā b. Nuṣayr.
- 711. Incursion into Spain. Capture of Toledo.
- 712. Completion of the conquest of Spain.
- 717. First occupation of the Narbonnaise, subsequently lost.
- 719. Reoccupation of the Narbonnaise.
- 721. Victory of Eudes of Aquitaine over the Arabs before Toulouse.
- 725. Sack of the Velay and of the Rouergue. Capture of Carcassonne. Surrender of Nimes.
- 731. Burning of Autun (or 725).
- 732. Capture of Bordeaux.
- 732 or 733. Battle of Poitiers.
- 734–735. Sack of Provence. Capture of Avignon by Yūsuf, governor of Narbonne, with the consent of Maurout, Duke of Marseilles.
- 735. Capture of Arles.
- 737. Unsuccessful but devastating expedition of Charles Martel against Narbonne and Nimes.
- 738–739. Expedition of the Franks against Maurout and his Arab allies.
- 751. Defeat of Gaifer, Duke of Aquitaine, before Narbonne.
- 752. Pippin the Short recaptures Nimes, Agde, Beziers.
- 759. Pippin retakes Narbonne with the support of the Gothic aristocracy.

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- 793. Last Arab campaign against the South of France. Death and defeat of Guillaume, Count of Toulouse. Sarrašin attack foiled.
- 827. Conquest of Crete by Cordovan émigrés based in Alexandria.
- [40] 827. Start of the conquest of Sicily by the Aghlabids of North Africa.
- 831. Occupation of Palermo.
- 837. Installation of the Arabs in southern Italy.
- 841? Capture of Bari.
- 842–843. Capture of Messina with the aid of the Neapolitans.
- 846. Arrival of the Arabs at the gates of Rome.
- 878. Fall of Syracuse.
- 882–883. Installation of the Arabs on the Garigliano.
- 891. Installation of Arab pirates from Spain at Fraxinet (La Garde-Freinet).
- 902. Fall of Taormina, last Byzantine base in Sicily.
- 915. End of the Arab colony of Garigliano.
- 972. End of the Arab colony of Frazinet.

In this list, there are durable and extensive conquests of territory as well as limited occupations of more or less ephemeral positions. They were effected by military or maritime forces sometimes operating far away from the centre of the Islamic state or of the new Islamic states which had been constituted, against prosperous populations, enjoying the advantages of an ancient civilisation and of the political organisation which they owed to the empires or the kingdoms of which they formed a part. These conquests were the activity, at the outset and for some time, not of important and organised armies, but of groups or bands with a special aptitude for the performance of *razzias*.

It is thus necessary to try to explain this military expansion and to seek out the factors contributing to its success.

Sometimes there have been attempts to explain it in terms of the religious enthusiasm of the Muslim combatants which led them to view death with disdain, in terms of the irresistible strength inspired in them by the sense of fulfilment of a sacred duty, that [41] of *jihād* (holy war), which made it an obligation to fight the Infidels until they either converted to the new religion, or committed themselves to payment of *kharāj* and *jizya* (property tax and capitation), and thus accepted the status of protected subjects, preserving their right to the free exercise of their religion, so long as this was not paganism. At other times, it has even been considered that the principal motivation of Muslims in the era of conquests was the desire to convert non-Muslims. But it has been known for a long time that the Muslims did not generally convert by force, that, as Goldziher has pointed out, the champions



of Islam were less interested in converting the Infidels than in subjecting them to tribute, and that in the majority of cases conversions took place by the force of circumstances, on account of the advantages to be gained by integration into the Muslim community.

As for religious enthusiasm and ardour for the holy war, it is certain that numerous Muslims were moved by this sentiment. Besides obedience to the sacred duty of *jihād*, there was also the attraction of the heavenly reward for those who fell on the battlefield. There are numerous accounts describing combatants going to their deaths with joyful heart, seeing visions of the celestial *houri* who is calling to them and signalling to them. *Ḥadīth*-s exalt sacrifice; *jihād* is the monachism of Islam; Paradise is in the shadow of swords; every wound is an open door leading to Paradise etc. But the mass of the Bedouin who at the outset constituted the bulk of the troops, and whose recent conversion had been purely self-interested and exterior, was not motivated by an ardent faith, but rather by the attraction of booty. They had nothing of the fanaticism of Cromwell's Roundheads. In the Umayyad period, religious enthusiasm was no greater than it had been in [42] the period of the first caliphs. The campaigns directed against Byzantine territory across the multiple gorges of the Amanus and the Taurus, the *darb* which had even frightened 'Umar, were viewed with apprehension. Some women tried to prevent their husbands participating in certain campaigns; Yazīd, son of Mu'āwiya, showed little enthusiasm to join the army which was besieging Constantinople, and on his arrival, he promised to undertake no further naval expeditions or winter campaigns, which certainly corresponded to the wishes of the troops; Tyane and Antioch of Pisidia were regarded as "cities of Hell" according to a *ḥadīth*. It is probable that in other theatres of operations, enthusiasm would not have been more universal.

It would however be a mistake to disregard the role of religion. Islam had effected a substantial revolution in effacing the former distinctions and making all Muslims equal servants of Allah, distinguished only by the zeal – whether more or less – which they demonstrated in his service. The highest form of this service was the practice of holy war, and in this context the first Muslim to present himself could be the equal of the greatest of chieftains. This sense of democratic pride could inspire acts of devotion and even vocations and military promotions.

A further addition to these sentiments, in the Umayyad era, was a surge of enthusiasm which could be described as national. Islamism and Arabism had become synonymous and a spirit of Arab imperialism had developed. The Umayyads wanted to destroy the Byzantine empire which they both admired and detested, and substitute for it an Arab empire professing the Muslim

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religion. Such a state of mind was not readily perceptible among the proletariat. It existed nevertheless.

To return to the role of religious enthusiasm, [43] it was barely comprehensible to the Byzantines, even though they were in a state of constant warfare against the Arabs. They failed to take into account the influence which could be exerted on combatants by the promise of heavenly reward. The emperor Leon VI thought that the Arabs were animated solely by the expectation of booty and by a barbarous love of war. Only Nicephorus Phocas understood, trying in vain to persuade the Byzantine church to adopt a doctrine similar to the Muslim doctrine of martyrdom.

It was indeed religious enthusiasm allied with love of booty which brought large numbers of volunteers flocking to the *ribāṭ* of Tarsus where they were trained militarily and religiously to participate in expeditions against Byzantine territory.

Religious enthusiasm should therefore be considered an important factor in the Arab expansion, but its role should not be exaggerated. It is not sufficient to explain the military successes and the conquests, no more than are the ambitions of the Umayyad caliphs who had sometimes been apprehensive, like 'Umar who was afraid of the sea and of the remoteness of his armies.

There have also been attempts to see in the Arab expansion an irresistible flux of Arab tribes driven by hunger and poverty to leave Arabia and spread out across the wealthy countries; the attraction of pillage and of booty, the prospect of an easier life would have undermined the familial pressures of the Arabs. It seems that there are certain facts which could be invoked in support of this thesis. It was through the bait of booty that Abū Bakr succeeded in transforming the wars of the *ridda* (the period of apostasy of tribes following the death of the Prophet) into wars of conquest. The Arab tribes would not have succumbed so easily if the conquests had not offered them a diversion, if they had not provided a satisfactory solution [44] to the economic problems of the Arabian Peninsula. According to Balādhurī, the Persian Rustam said to the Arabs: "It is hunger that has drawn you out of your deserts." But Khālīd al-Walīd objected strongly to affirmations of this kind and, when offered gifts by a Byzantine chieftain in return for withdrawing his forces, he replied: "It is neither hunger nor poverty that has driven us from our land. We, the Arabs, are drinkers of blood and we know there is no blood more tasty than that of the Greeks. That is why we have come, to spill and to drink your blood."

Nevertheless, it is quite certain that Arabs living in penury were susceptible to the promises of booty which the holy war would enable them

to acquire, promises made to them by Abū Bakr as well as by ‘Umar, as Balādhurī has shown.

The attraction of booty was furthermore linked to religious enthusiasm. Thus it could be said that the *jihād* was a lottery in which every player could be assured of winning: those who died had the guarantee of Paradise, those who survived had their share of the booty.

However, the economic factor should not be accorded too much importance. If the Arabs had been impelled by poverty alone into conquering Syria and Mesopotamia, then once secure and established in these countries, enjoying an easier life, they would have needed to go no further. But they did not stop there.

If it is to be considered that the Arab expansion, and the successes achieved, are not adequately explained by religious enthusiasm, nor by an exodus of famished tribes, nor by the ambitions of caliphs, nor the incentive of booty, then supplementary explanations need to be sought. Thus the question is raised as to whether conquests were achieved thanks to superiority in number, superiority in [45] weaponry, or in deployment of troops or in command, in other words thanks to material superiority over their adversaries, whether the Muslims were better led, enjoyed better morale, and were capable of greater endurance and more warlike ardour than their enemies. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine the possibility that there are political factors which explain the military success of the Arabs.

First of all, it seems that the Arabs did not have superiority in numbers. It is hard to believe the fantastical figures supplied by Arab historians in relation to the forces of the Byzantines and the Persians. These figures are manifestly exaggerated: states as enormous and powerful as Sasanid Persia or the Byzantine Empire could not, they reckoned, have at their disposal armed forces of fewer than 100,000–200,000 men. This is why, at Qādisiyya, they estimate the Persian army at 120,000 men and 30 elephants, at Nehavend at 60,000 or 100,000 men. At Ajnadayn, the Greeks would have had 100,000 men, at the Yarmūk, 200,000. In Egypt, the total strength of local forces is estimated at 25,000–30,000 men. This figure is not exaggerated although the preceding figures certainly are.

The Arab totals are meagre by comparison: 9,000–10,000 at Qādisiyya: in Syria Abū Bakr deployed in all, vanguard and reinforcements, 24,000 men; Khālīd b. al-Walīd, when he left Iraq to go and reinforce the troops in Syria on the caliph's orders, had with him no more than 500 or 600 or 800 horsemen. At the siege of the fortress of Babylon, Qasr al-Sham', there were no more than 15,000 Arabs, a figure inferior to that of the Byzantine army of Egypt.

[46] The troops invading Ifrīqiya, if the figures given by historians are to be trusted, were more numerous: 20,000 men with ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d according to Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s figure given for the battle of Sbeitla, against 120,000 adversaries. The army of Ḥasan b. al-Nu‘mān would have comprised 40,000 men, but a Tunisian historian, Ibn Nāji’, reduces this figure to 6,000. W. Marçais has evaluated the strength of the Arab contingents moving from Syria and Egypt into North Africa, combining the expeditions of the Umayyad period and the ‘Abbāsīd period, at 150,000 men.

No one knows exactly the number of troops, including Berbers, who crossed into Spain. It seems that Ṭāriq b. Ziyād had with him no more than 7,000 men who were subsequently reinforced by 5,000. Later, with Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, 18,000 men arrived, predominantly Arabs. The estimate of 100,000 men for Rodrigo’s army is no doubt exaggerated.

It is also difficult to assess the number of troops who crossed the Pyrenees in the various raids undertaken by Arab governors before the Umayyad period in Spain. It is not easy to assess the total strength that they were capable of mustering.

All in all it is probable that, except in isolated cases, in their various encounters the Arabs were never superior in number to their adversaries.

Was their armament superior? It is an exaggeration to say that the armament of the Arabs was entirely rudimentary, that in the early days only chieftains and a few privileged individuals possessed coats of chain mail. In the pre-Islamic period, it was certainly a luxury to have a good coat of mail. But the poets describe to us in such a wealth of detail the armament of warriors of tribes at war between themselves – helmet, shield, lance, [47] sword, bow and arrows, coat of mail and coif of mail – that there is no reason to suppose that these weapons were not in widespread use. They also speak of manufacturers of arms and means of maintaining and repairing arms. In this period, many arms originated from Yemen and Syria, but throughout Arabia there were armourers, often highly regarded. It can be seen from ancient poetry how much value the Arabs attached to the possession of weapons. There is no need to imagine the warriors of the Prophet’s time armed in rudimentary fashion, while conceding that not all would have had the full complement of arms, just as not all would have possessed a horse.

In the era of the first caliphs, the first campaigns acquired sufficient booty to equip a much larger number of combatants than had been possible in the past and the Arabs found among the Syrians a surplus of armourers.

We have papyrological documents describing the army of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ who conquered Egypt, which shows us that this army was well equipped: coat of mail extending from the shoulders to the ankles, mail coif serving as visor

and nape-cover (*mighfar*), conical helmet, round shield, lance, short and straight Roman sword suspended from the shoulder on a diagonal belt. The army was accompanied by a train consisting of smiths and repairers of weapons. A document of 647 mentions 342 men and 12 manufacturers of coats of mail, another from the same year speaks of boatmen, of cavalry and of heavily armed infantry. At the siege of Qasr al-Sham', there is reference to an Arab mangonel and to rope-ladders. It is said that at the siege of Damascus, the soldiers of Khālīd b. al-Walīd, equipped with rope-ladders and lassos, crossed a moat full of water on inflated goatskins which they then replaced on their backs, threw the [48] lassos to latch onto the battlements, scaled the walls and let the rope-ladders down for the other assailants. Such exploits are not impossible.

There is no reason to suppose that the Arabs were not sufficiently armed; but they certainly did not have a net superiority of armament over their Persian, Byzantine or Visigoth adversaries.

Their military organisation was without doubt inferior to that of their enemies. But given the resources possessed by the Qurayshite aristocracy, having at its disposal trained staff experienced in making calculations and planning projects and displaying military and political talents, this group was certainly capable of organising armies. It is recorded by Balādhurī that Medina was always in rapid communication with the expeditionary forces, for making changes in the command structure, for the dispatch of provisions. 'Umar sent from Medina to the troops operating in the region of the Lower Euphrates ready-fattened sheep and cattle. The army of 'Amr b. al- 'Āṣ, as we have seen, had a substantial supply train. The provision by the local Egyptian administration of forage, of animals for butchery, of meals composed of three or four courses, in return for payment, is recorded in papyrus documents. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ was adept at changing the deployment of his troops according to the seasons and each tribe found itself assigned zones of spring pasturage. Some passages from Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam are instructive in this respect and are to be compared with the well-known text of Qudāma on the organisation of spring, summer and winter expeditions. The institution of the camp-cities of Kūfa, Baṣra, Jābiya, also testifies to the same spirit of organisation.

Journey-stages and the rearguard were organised. Similarly the remounting of troops on horse and camels. Thus, in [49] North Africa, 'Uqba, after his victory at Baghay, confiscated a number of horses from the inhabitants, having been particularly impressed by the stamina of the horses of the land. Theoreticians of the Holy War were later to insist on the vigilance that the emir was required to exercise over the horses, which should be chosen on account of their rebellious spirit.

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So at an early stage there was a kind of commissariat.

It is certain on the other hand that chieftains like Abū 'Ubayda, Khālīd b. al-Walīd, 'Amr b. al-Āṣ, had experience of command which they acquired in the battles which marked the end of the Prophetic era, and in the struggles against the tribes. Using methods imitated from those of Persia or of Byzantium, they succeeded in disciplining and training the untamed, quarrelsome and belligerent Bedouins, whom they recruited and transformed into soldiers through the guarantee of regular payments for them and their families assured by the institution of the *Dīwān*. It is furthermore worth noting that the first Arab armies were composed exclusively of Bedouins. In that of 'Amr b. al-Āṣ, in particular, contingents from the Yemen, i.e. from a country which enjoyed a civilisation superior to that of the Arabs of Central Arabia, were important.

In the Umayyad period, military organisation reached a high degree of development. The Umayyad army was aware of the division into vanguard, centre, wings, rearguard, the distinction between heavy cavalry (in chain-mail) and light cavalry, baggage-train, logistics, siege machines, each of those groups being under separate command. At the end of the Umayyad period, the division into *karādī-s* emerged, separate battalions or squadrons, which led to changes in tactics. However some things which had existed since the time of the Prophet were preserved, for example, the basic unit, [50] the *irāfa* of 10 to 15 men, and the tribal division, each tribal group having a particular flag. For this period, Ṭabarī, as utilised in a small work by N. Fries, supplies us with a wealth of information regarding armament, tactics, discipline, the distribution of booty, the compatibility of shares, logistics, etc. He sometimes gives us details of provisions, foodstuffs and beverages, prepared in advance of campaigns. There were shops and depots storing victuals, as are often mentioned in accounts of the expedition of Maslama. Sometimes these reserves were left untouched in anticipation of long campaigns and local razzias were conducted. Otherwise forage was usually taken from the country invaded and that is why there was a preference for summer expeditions, so that crops could be requisitioned. Armies took with them flocks of sheep which were carefully guarded against any cause of panic. Provisions were also obtained from the markets of enemy countries, under the terms of treaties.

As far as tactics were concerned, there can be no doubt that from the outset, Arab chieftains were perfectly capable of manoeuvring. In Syria, Khālīd b. al-Walīd successfully conducted a tactical retreat before the forces of Heraclius who had just retaken Homs and Damascus, towards the Yarmūk. At the Yarmūk, his turning movement was a decisive element in his victory. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ had revealed his tactical talents as early as the time of the "War of the

Trench". In the Egyptian campaign, he showed prudence and skill in his march on Babylon. Needless to say, the ruses of war, ambushes, defensive trenches, etc., were continuously employed. The frontal attack in line, the attack followed by a rapid retreat and redeployment in readiness for another attack, were part of the tactical repertoire of the separate squadrons at the end of the Umayyad period.

Given the spirit of anarchic liberty and the tribal rivalries, discipline seems to have been more lax among [51] the Arabs than among the Byzantines or the Persians. In the Umayyad period, the troops of Iraq were less disciplined than those of Syrian origin who were the mainstay of the dynasty. But the rivalry between Arabs of the North (Qaysites) and Arabs of the South (Kalbites), which continued even in Spain, was seriously detrimental to the unity of the army. However, in external wars this spirit of indiscipline was less manifest than in internal wars. Furthermore, chieftains were adept at provoking religious enthusiasm or at appealing to a point of honour, and this could nip indiscipline in the bud.

The military prowess of the Arabs, whatever may be thought of their defects, especially where Bedouins were involved, was without any doubt not inferior to that of their adversaries, and in addition to their innate qualities as spirited warriors they had the advantage conferred on them by their offensive role, whereas their enemies were most often reduced to standing on the defensive. As for the Berbers, who constituted an important element of the Muslim forces in Spain, in Sicily, and in Italy, it is known that they were superb fighters and Ibn Ḥawqal praised their contribution to the success of the Fāṭimid army. Arabs and Berbers had the advantage over their adversaries of being accustomed to a frugal life, and hence capable of enduring privations, including hunger and thirst. We learn from anecdotes that the conquerors had never seen white bread, or rice, when they arrived in Iraq. They were used to the desert, to long stretches without water, and the obstacles presented by the desert to a Byzantine army posed no problems for them. Whether they were mounted on horses or camels, the desert did not impede them. Thus, for their invasion of Syria, the Arab columns chose the desert route rather than that of the coast where the towns were populated and defended. The march effected by [52] Kḥalid b. al-Walid from Iraq into Syria through the desert is famous. Once in Egypt, the Arabs had no difficulty crossing the desert of Tripolitania and, in North Africa, following the route via the arid plains rather than that of the littoral. It was this familiarity with the desert which induced them to found Kairouan on the fringes of the steppe, for protection from the Byzantine fleet.

These advantages were matched by defects. The Arabs were as prone to panic and stampede as they were to launching audacious attacks, to

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indiscipline as to enthusiastic obedience. Cases of desertion, treachery, pillage of their own camps, were not uncommon among them. Very often their success was the result of the weakness of their adversaries, and when the latter showed tenacity and mounted effective resistance, then despite their initial fervour and a temporary advantage the Arabs failed to win decisive victories.

As a whole, if we consider the different military factors whereby we might attempt to explain the expansion of the Arabs, we conclude that their military qualities were supplemented by the advantages of frugality and familiarity with the desert, by the stimulus of religious enthusiasm and the attractions of booty, but that they were not lacking in defects, and in numbers, armament, military organisation, tactics, discipline etc., they did not enjoy a marked superiority; rather the opposite, since it takes a young state a long time to acquire what older states possess as a result of tradition and secular efforts. The success of the Arabs, even in the period of the apogee of the Umayyad era, cannot be explained by an incontestable superiority in the military domain.

Thus other reasons need to be taken into consideration if we are to account for the Arab expansion.

[53] The principal reason is that their adversaries were for various reasons found to be in a state of material or moral inferiority in relation to the invaders.

Such was the case of the Byzantines and the Persians. On the one hand they were not protected by powerful natural obstacles. On the Byzantine side, the Arab expansion was only halted when the Arabs found themselves confronting the barrier of the Taurus; although they crossed this range in a series of spectacular raids, these did not lead to a permanent occupation of territory. Similarly, while divisions among the Armenians and the inefficiency of Byzantium enabled them to occupy Armenia, they were unable to subjugate the Khazars beyond the Caucasus. No insurmountable obstacle hindered their advance into Persia. On the other hand the Byzantine empire and the Sasanid empire had been reciprocally enfeebled by the wars which they had waged, and which had exhausted them in terms of manpower and finance. Persia had invaded Syria, Palestine and Egypt, a Persian army had advanced as far as the Bosphorus. Heraclius did admittedly regain the lost Byzantine provinces and then carried the war into Persian territory. But as a result of these wars, at the time of the Arab invasion neither of the two empires was capable of wielding the power of former times. Heraclius was faced with a massive programme of reconstruction after the Persian war and the war against the Avars. In Persia, anarchy had followed the disaster of 628.



Nevertheless, it seems astonishing that the two empires could not have put up a better resistance to the still poorly equipped Arab troops who invaded Syria and Iraq. But in neither of these provinces was there a situation entirely free from danger. Although the capital of the Sasanid empire was in Iraq, the country was Semitic and in part Christian, and the Arab tribes populating it [54] were naturally disposed towards siding with the invaders. Furthermore, it was the Bakr b. Wā'il who appealed to the Arabs and invited them to attack Ḥīra. Monophysite Syria was infuriated by the religious oppression exerted by Byzantium as well as by its own administration which imposed crippling burdens of taxation. While certain tribes remained faithful to Byzantium and fought alongside it, others, aware that the empire had suppressed the subsidy to the Arabs of the *limes*, took the side of their compatriots from the Peninsula. The two empires which, fundamentally, felt a certain contempt for the Arabs, and had few contacts with them except through their Lakhmid and Ghassānid phylarchs, were unaware of their state of mind and could not imagine that these Arab populations would one day be ranged against them, aiding the invaders.

After several engagements in the course of which the Arabs became aware of the weakness of the Persian command structure, the battle of Qādisiyya delivered Mesopotamia into their hands and the Sasanid empire was soon reduced to a defensive role on the territory of Persia proper. In Syria, where Byzantium had no effective bases inside the country, troops had to be brought in over long distances, and these were composed largely of Armenians whose entente with the Greeks was far from perfect, often resulting in the outbreak of dissension even in the heat of battle.

Thus, the military weakness of the Persians and the Byzantines, overt or latent hostility towards them on the part of sections of the countries invaded, explain the success of the Arabs in Syria and in Iraq.

In Egypt there was only a disorganised and diverse army, occupied primarily with a policing role and the protection of tax-gatherers, torn between rival chieftains and without [55] central direction. It was for the most part composed of Copts, recruited *in situ* by conscription or voluntary engagement, serving close to their homes. Although adequately manned in terms of numbers, this army was of poor quality. For the same reasons as in Syria, the population looked forward eagerly to the end of the political and religious domination of Byzantium. We know through a Christian author that 'Amr b. al-Āṣ was powerfully aided, morally and materially, by the Copts.

In North Africa, Byzantium barely held more than the coastal towns. As for the interior of the country, it was in a state of political and religious disarray eminently favourable to the enterprises of the Arabs. The links of the

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empire with the Berbers were fairly loose. But successes were initially less spectacular than elsewhere. The raid of 647 as far as Sbeitla had no lasting effects. Subsequently, with Byzantium still in control of the coast, the Arabs were obliged to establish their base on the edge of the desert at Kairouan and Byzantium renewed its links with the Berbers. Carthage did not fall definitively to the Arabs until 698. Two years later, the Berber resistance collapsed with the death of the Kāhina, and in 700 Byzantium lost North Africa entirely. The hostility of the population towards Byzantium was perhaps less strong than elsewhere, but here too the Arabs were aided by the Berbers who adopted Islam and became the allies of the conquerors.

In Spain, the Visigoth army of Roderick was in disarray, since part of it was commanded by supporters of one of the king's rivals. The kingdom was in a state of decadence. The dissensions prevailing there were made known to the Arabs by the famous Count Julian, exarch of Ceuta; it is not definitely known whether he was Greek or Berber. The population of the countryside was indifferent. A single battle was enough to defeat Roderick's army. When [56] Mūsā b. Nuṣayr marched into Spain, he encountered no strong resistance, and the conquest proceeded without difficulties.

In Septimania, the Arabs and the Berbers easily took possession of the ruins of the Visigoth kingdom and the Narbonnaise, taken for the first time in 717, then lost, retaken in 719 or 720, remained in Arab hands until 759. However the Arabs were unable to pass beyond southern France except in the context of raids for the purposes of pillage, sometimes launched over long distances. But it was less the battle of Poitiers in 732 (or 733) which halted their conquering drive, than the difficulties that erupted in the Maghrib al-Aqṣā between Berbers and Arabs.

A lot of ink has flowed around the battle of Poitiers. There is still discussion of the precise localisation of this famous Balāt al-Shuhadā' (a term also applied to the battle of Toulouse) and of the importance and the causes of the Arab defeat. In his study of the reign of the caliph Hishām, Gabrieli was of the opinion that the limits of Arab expansion were attained at that time, and that the Arabs would have been unable to exceed them without endangering their unity, without weakening the supremacy which they exercised over an extensive tract of territory, from the steppes of Central Asia to the Atlantic; furthermore they did not have in central France a strategic or moral objective to be attained, and they never wanted to strike a major blow in this area, with implications for the Holy War. Attracted by the riches of the monastery of Saint Martin of Tours, they intended nothing more than a razzia like any other. The victory of Charles Martel has been considered crucial and has been compared with the defeat of Maslama before Constantinople. But this parallel

is not exact. There was no vital centre in this region of France, while Constantinople was the capital of the empire. Their defeat did not have much effect on the [57] Arabs. The victory of Eudes of Aquitaine before Toulouse in 721 had a far greater impact on them. Did Poitiers save Christianity and western culture, as has been claimed? It is probable that if the Arabs had been victorious at Poitiers and advanced to the north of the Loire, they would not have been able to stay there because they were too far from their bases in Spain. An Arab victory would, no doubt, only have delayed the movement which led the Franks, their unity restored by Charles Martel, towards the conquest of the South of France. In any case the Franks did not attach particular importance to the victory at Poitiers. When, under Louis the Pious, the walls of the palace of Ingelheim were decorated with tableaux glorifying the achievements of the great leaders, it was not this victory which was chosen to illustrate the activity of Charles Martel, but the surrender of Frisons. However, the battle of Poitiers illustrates what has already been underlined. When the Arabs found themselves confronting the forces of a chieftain determined to mount a tenacious resistance to the fervour of the Arab squadrons, in a country where they could not rely on the complicity of the local populace or on other favourable circumstances, they were repulsed. Encountering the "ice-wall" of the Franks, they hastily beat a retreat.

The Arabs often had the good fortune to be aided, not only by the weakness of their enemies, but also by various circumstances. As Ibn Khaldūn has rightly commented, victory does not depend only on the strength of armies, on the skill and courage deployed in combat, but also on luck and accident. Among these circumstances we may mention: the dislike of Byzantium on the part of the Syrians and the Copts; in North Africa the complicity of the Count Julian who offered his cooperation to Mūsā b. Nuṣayr and lent his four ships [58] to Ṭāriq b. Ziyād for the purpose of crossing the Strait; in Spain, the assistance which the Jews, persecuted by the Visigoths, offered to the same Ṭāriq during his march on Toledo. It may also be noted that in North Africa, without the complicity of certain Berber dignitaries, the subjugation of the land would only have been achieved with considerable difficulty; that in Septimania, the Arabs were aided by the Gothic nobility whose privileges they guaranteed; that in Sicily, the treason of the admiral Euphemius opened the way to them; that in Provence, the treason of Maurout, Duke of Marseilles, facilitated the taking of Avignon; that in Italy, rivalry between the Lombard duchies, the hostility against Byzantium of the Lombards and of cities like Naples or Amalfi, helped the Arabs immeasurably; that several cities allied themselves with them and used Arab contingents in their internecine conflicts; that Naples, in particular, was "for nine years,

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another Africa”; that thanks to these circumstances, the colony of Garigliano was able to sustain itself for so long. A typical case is that of Hugues of Provence, who having in 942 contributed with the fleet of Romain Lecapenus to the defeat of the Arabs of Fraxinet, subsequently negotiated with them and used them against his rival for the throne of Italy, Beranger.

On the other hand, they had the good fortune that the conquered populations were easily accommodated to the new regime, often more liberal than the previous one, and to the imposition of taxes which were sometimes vexatious, but less oppressive than the previous, and that they did not rebel, except in North Africa and later in Egypt, their docile behaviour facilitating subsequent progress.

Thus, weakness of their adversaries, conjunctions of various circumstances – such were to a great extent the causes of the successes of the Arabs. This is not to belittle the merits and qualities of chieftains like Khālid b. al-Walid, ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ, ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’, Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, Asad [59] b. al-Furāt and others who were capable of making the best use of the sometimes meagre forces at their disposal and profiting from circumstances. While we do not need to attach credence to the opinion according to which ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ would have invaded Egypt despite opposition from ‘Umar, it is certain that a more timorous leader than Mūsā b. Nuṣayr would not have decided on the invasion of Spain for which the caliph Walid showed little enthusiasm. Thanks to the circumstances and also thanks to the upheaval caused by the new religion, rather as happened at the time of the French Revolution – talents came to the fore.

But having examined the issue from a terrestrial perspective, the maritime aspect also requires attention since, from a certain moment onwards, it was as a result of the constitution of a navy that the Arabs were enabled to carry out certain conquests especially in the western section of the Mediterranean. Ibn Khaldūn has highlighted this fact in a well-known page of the *Prolegomena*. Having noted that, thanks to their naval power, Romans and Byzantines had rendered the Berbers of North Africa utterly powerless, he shows how the Arabs ultimately freed themselves from the aversion to the sea for which ‘Umar had been responsible and, using the maritime populations of the conquered countries who had volunteered their services, they acquired experience of maritime affairs and, with the aim of conducting the Holy War at sea, set these populations to constructing warships. It was thus that the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik ordered Ḥasan b. al-Nu‘mān, governor of Ifrīqiya, to construct an arsenal at Tunis; it was thus that Sicily was conquered in the time of the Aghlabid Ziyādat Allāh I, while a first expedition in the time of Mu‘āwiya had been unsuccessful. “The Muslims,” he says, “controlled the Mediterranean on all sides. Their strength and their power were considerable. Nowhere on this

sea could the Christian nations [60] do anything to resist the Muslim fleets. They crisscrossed this sea incessantly as conquerors and obtained successes there marked by conquests and acquisition of booty. Thus, the Muslims took possession of all the islands situated far from the Mediterranean coasts such as Majorca and Minorca, Ibiza, Sardinia, Sicily, Pantellaria, Malta, Crete, Cyprus and the other Frankish and Byzantine possessions.”

It is known that it was Mu‘āwiya who, in the time of ‘Uthmān, inaugurated the maritime policy. In the list provided by Ibn Khaldūn, it is to be noted that he does not specify the dates of the capture of the islands, which were not conquered simultaneously.

Sardinia was not taken until 1014–1015, by Mujāhid of Denia.

From this point of view, it is interesting to study the respective evolution of Byzantine naval power and Arab naval power, and the effect of this evolution on Arab expansion. It is observed that, when Byzantium had a powerful fleet, Arab progress was retarded or halted; when the Byzantine fleet was weak, the Arabs advanced. Conversely, when the Arabs had a powerful fleet facing a depleted Byzantine navy, their conquests were facilitated. This parallelism has been well illustrated by Archibald R. Lewis in his work *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean, A.D. 500–1100*, Princeton 1951.

After 655, the Arabs who had been quick to utilise the arsenals of Alexandria and of Syria, which had fallen into their hands intact, won the naval victory known by the name of Battle of the Masts off the coast of Lycia. But Byzantium used its fleet to maintain control over the coasts of North Africa, while seizing the opportunity to forge a coalition with the Berbers of the interior. This had fatal consequences for ‘Uqba, who died in battle, attacked by the Berber Kusayla [61] commanding a contingent of Berbers and of Rūm, in 683, when returning from his foray towards the Atlantic. When ‘Abd al-Malik, to avenge this defeat, sent an expedition led by Zuhayr b. Qays, the Byzantine fleet landed troops at Barqa and Zuhayr was forced to retreat and was then defeated. It was thanks to its fleet that Byzantium was enabled to take Carthage, albeit on a temporary basis. It was ‘Abd al-Malik again who ordered Ḥasan b. al-Nu‘mān to create a naval base in North Africa: he sent him 1,000 Coptic artisans along with their families, to build the ships, and it was Tunis which was chosen as the port of preference, rather than Carthage which was more exposed.

The expeditions of the Arabs in North Africa had great importance for the Mediterranean policy of Byzantium, since as a result of them the maritime right flank of Byzantium was turned. The empire defended itself better in the East where it inflicted a defeat at Maslama despite the mustering of 1,800 Arab warships, from Syria, Egypt and Ifrikiya. Between 720 and 725, the

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Byzantine fleet was capable of mounting raids in the Egyptian delta. But the consequences of the installation of a naval base at Tunis were soon to make themselves felt: between 727 and 752, there were six raids on Sicily and two on Sardinia.

However, in 747, Byzantium won a decisive naval victory off the coast of Cyprus. Furthermore it still held the islands: the Balearics, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Crete. The Arabs were forced to organise their defences in North Africa, founding the *ribāṭ* of Monastir, fortifying Tripoli. In Egypt itself, Hārūn al-Rashīd abandoned the project of building a canal across the isthmus of Suez, fearing that the Byzantine fleet might take control of it and gain access to the Red Sea. But, during the reign of the Empress Irene in the early ninth century, Byzantium having neglected its fleet, the number of Arab maritime raids increased, on [62] the Balearics, Corsica and Sardinia, on the Italian coastal regions ruled by the Franks. The civil war of Thomas the Slav, supported by maritime elements, led to the destruction by the imperial fleet of Constantinople, which had remained loyal, of the fleet of these elements and the overall enfeebling of the Byzantine navy. Then we observe almost at the same time, in 827, landings in Crete and in Sicily. In Sicily, where Byzantium was reduced to a defensive role and was never able to muster sufficient forces to undertake a reconquest and maintain its last bases, Syracuse fell in 878; in southern Italy, as we have seen, the complexity of the political situation favoured the Arabs, and it took an alliance of Franks and Byzantines to regain Bari in 871. All the coasts, as far as the base of the Adriatic, were the object of Arab attacks; in the East, Cretan or Syrian pirates made numerous raids (the sack of Thessalonika in 904 is notorious), but the Byzantine fleet also won victories and the empire was never in danger. It was however incapable of retaking Crete until 961.

The Arab expansion, halted in 717 before Constantinople, encountered the same fate in France at the end of the Eighth Century, and in the second half of the Ninth in southern Italy. However, there remained points of occupation such as Garigliano and Fraxinet from which raids were launched. But it was no longer a case of conquests and expansion. The expansion stalled when the Christian states reasserted themselves: Byzantium menaced in its capital, Gaul with its Frankish unity reconstituted, Spain with the formation of young kingdoms which, without the intervention of the Berber power of Morocco, would without doubt have accomplished the reconquest sooner. The Arabs had definitely lost the verve which had animated them at the start.

I have tried to show what were the causes of the expansion of the Arabs and of their successes. These can be attributed on the one hand to the religious

enthusiasm of the Muslims, without this being a determinant element, on the other hand to their military prowess as well as that of some of their leaders, but especially to the weaknesses and divisions of their adversaries. It is definitely the case that the expansion of the Arabs cannot be explained solely by referring to accident, chance and the various circumstances which worked to the disadvantage of their enemies. But it still is not evident that the Arabs had in themselves, even taking into account the strength given them by the new religion which unified them, the exceptional resources, qualities and energies which would be sufficient to make comprehensible the breadth of their extraordinary successes. A curious fact is that their most rapid conquests were not the action of a single person, as was the case with the great conquerors of history, Alexander, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Napoleon. Not one of the Arab chieftains had the stature of these great captains, or could call upon armies as massive, as well organised and equipped as the armies at the disposal of these conquerors.

These being the conditions, the Arab expansion is by no means inexplicable, but its facility and relative rapidity will never cease to perplex us.

## 6

# THE FIRST EXPANSION OF ISLAM: FACTORS OF THRUST AND CONTAINMENT

*Gustave E. von Grunebaum*

Viewed from Mecca, its place of origin, or from Medina, its first capital, the expansion of Islam is impressive not least because it extended in every direction. There is one area of limited failure nearby, in the Ethiopian highlands across the Red Sea; otherwise a cohesive Islamic belt stretches with only minor interruptions or enclaves into India, Central Asia, past the Bosphorus, throughout North and much of West Africa into the center and down the Eastern coast of the Black Continent—not to mention, apart from minor concentrations elsewhere, for example in the Western hemisphere, the solid blocks of Muslims in Indonesia, parts of China and the Southern Philippines.

Speculation has been generous in supplying theories to account for the success as well as the limitations of the geographical outreach of Islam. Compatibility or incongruity with arid or semi-arid zones, tropical forests and savannahs, accessibility to nomadism, physically and intellectually, a negative affinity to moderate, let alone cold climates—all such endeavors to order and



explain a highly differentiated complex of facts by means of one or the other principles of organization are rather easily disproved by a glance at a historical atlas, or where they seem to fit, at least partially invalidated by consideration of ethnic, socio-economic and, above all, political (and military) factors.

It is a datum of history, as simple as it is incontrovertible, that during the first phase of Muslim expansion—almost entirely carried forward by Arab leadership with Arab manpower and extending from about A.D. 633, the beginning of planned raids on Persian and Byzantine territory, to about A.D. 751 the consolidation of Muslim control over Central Asia by the turning back of the Chinese at Talas—no area was lastingly acquired, or converted to Islam which was not brought under continuous political domination by a Muslim government. This is as true for Spain (later lost to Christianity) as it is for Iran, Transoxiana, or the Ifriqiya. Besides, the initial Muslim expansion failed to obliterate any organized states of the same or superior administrative texture as the caliphate which it did not manage to crush at its very inception, such as Iran, or by a single major military effort, such as Visigoth Spain.

Within the span of activity of one generation Muslim political control reached its limits owing to three reverses—the siege of Constantinople had to be lifted in 717, Charles Martel stopped the Muslim raiders between Tours and Poitiers in 733 (rather than as usually stated, in 732), the victory of Marwan b. Muhammad over the Khazars in 737 proved ineffectual and the exit into the plains of Southern Russia remained closed to the Arabs. (In India, stabilization for almost three centuries was reached in 713 with the conquest of Sind and parts of the Punjab.) The Chinese defeat of 751 consolidated a previously won area of influence but did not open an avenue of conquest eastward. And yet, the ability of the caliphate to extend its sway as far as it did on the thin demographic base provided by its Arab ruling caste is perhaps the true miracle of the development of early Islam. The fact that conquest did not as a rule entail forcible conversion no doubt helped to secure the acquiescence of the overrun. So did the advantages accruing from integration in an enormous political compound. It must never be left out of sight that however desirable Islamization would appear to many Muslims and frequently,

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to the Muslim government as well, the immediate aim was, down to a fairly recent past, the establishment of Muslim control. The country rather than the souls of the inhabitants was to be won for Islam.

The *dār al-islām* is ultimately to absorb the *dār al-harb*, the "household of submission" the "household of resisters."<sup>1</sup> Resistance must be overcome. For to the Muslim, the finality of his faith can and must be realized in terms of political structure which guarantees the sway to the Religious Law, the *sharī'a*. But since this very law admits the unconverted monotheist individual conversion remains secondary to a hierarchical ordering of religious communities. Such ordering requires Muslim dominance.

As late a reformer and conqueror as 'Uthmān dan Fodio (1754-1817), the founder of the kingdom of Sokoto (in today's Northern Nigeria), stated: "The government of a country is the government of its king without question. If the king is a Muslim, his land is Muslim; if he is an Unbeliever, his land is a land of Unbelievers."<sup>2</sup>

It is true that even before the incisive changes brought about by the Mongols or occurring in their wake Islam acquired adherents in South Central Russia and that Muslims from other parts of the *dār al-islām* came to settle there, for example in Gurkūman (near Kiev).<sup>3</sup> It is also true that the Rūs, at times against Khazar obstruction, traded with the Muslims to the South East; nor is there any inclination to play down the importance and hence, the influence, of Islamic contacts as far North and West as Scandinavia. But however high the significance of trade relations and the (erratic) diplomatic relations may be assessed, it cannot be claimed that connection with the European North and even with European Russia as a whole has in any way whatever contributed to form the faith, the power structure and the civilization of Islam. The converse statement may be made for pre-Mongol Russia and for Scandinavia, although it may have to be conceded that one or the

<sup>1</sup> To use Kenneth Cragg's sensitive rendering in his *Sandals at the Mosque* (London, 1965), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Tanbīh al-ikhwān*, trans. H. R. Palmer, "African Affairs" (*Journal of the Royal African Society*), XIII (1913-14), 407-414; XIV (1914-15), 53-59, at XIV, 53 (Section iii of *Tanbīh*).

<sup>3</sup> For the localization of Gurkūman cf. C. E. Dubler, *Abū Hāmid el Grenadino y su relación de viaje por tierras eurasiáticas* (Madrid, 1953), pp. 232-233.

other political move of Varangians and Rūs was motivated by a desire to bypass the Khazars or in other ways to keep open the trade routes to the Muslim territories. One need but reflect on the contribution of Byzantium to its Northern neighbors and that of the Central Asians to the edifice of Islam to become aware of the marginality of the Islamic connection with the European North. It may be useful to restate that the basis of this judgment is essentially religious and cultural; it does not militate in any way against due appreciation of the migrations of objects and techniques of material civilization.

To comprehend somewhat more precisely than has hitherto been suggested, its development and with it its powers of attraction and absorption, the following aspects of the growth of an Islamic civilizational area must be envisaged and their implications followed through.

(1) Religious Islam precedes political Islam but only by a brief span. In conquering vast masses of land, for the most part to the East (North East) and the West of their homeland the Arabs, in the second half of the seventh century, established themselves as a thin *Herrenschicht*. Ideally at least and according to the hopes of the rulers, to be an Arab would coincide with being a Muslim. There was no eagerness to admit others to Islam and to rule. But there was, increasingly, the attraction of power—not always to be distinguished from that of the Muslim religion as such—and the need for assistance and identification on the part of some at least among the subject groups. The *dirigeants* of that power nucleus which was early Islam could not but use available traditions, skills, techniques, attitudes in solving as they arose, the problems implicit in managing a multinational empire and in preserving an intellectual identity in a culturally superior milieu.

The irruption of the Arabs into Byzantium reminds one inevitably of the earlier irruption of Germanic peoples into Rome. Leaving considerations of dimension and stability to one side, the decisive difference between the Germanic and the Arab invasions was the Arabs' sense of spiritual superiority of which pride of language and pride of race were integral parts. The greatest and last of God's prophets had been an Arab bringing a revelation in Arabic. There was no urge to "Romanize," to

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become civilized by integrating into "classical" culture, however inferior in almost every area of human attainment the conquerors may objectively have been vis-à-vis their Byzantine or Sassanian subjects.

The language curtain held and so did the sense of religious election, with religious precedence entailing a sense of collective moral and political superiority. The bearer of the higher truth rules as of right. The spiritual possessions of the communities, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, which the Muslim revelation has rendered obsolete, are *bonne prise* when serviceable and compatible—more realistically put, when needed and assimilable—; otherwise they must be shunned. Adoption of earlier achievement of the non-Muslim heritage is a natural process during the great age of the Islamic development (through the tenth century). Political supremacy and the self-assurance of the elect make borrowing into a joyful enlargement of the material and the psychological horizon. Rarely is there a trace of that xenophobic combativeness which is the constant companion of a feeling of inferiority. So the evolution of Islamic culture must be visualized as the clustering about a potent magnet of metal parings that are drawn into its field; the magnet remains the basic constant however dense the agglomeration of parings around it and however restlessly the hand holding it may, in fact, be moving in search of suitable and badly needed parings to cover the magnet's bare, blank sides.

(2) Islamic civilization may thus rightfully be described as having grown out of a blend of cultures, provided it is kept in mind that this process of creative combination or integration divides into two phases. The first both precedes and coincides with the preaching of the Prophet himself in which pagan, Jewish and Christian elements are readily identifiable. His doctrine prejudged, as it were, orientation and range of spiritual receptivity of the Arab Muslims entering the larger world in consequence of the conquests, by skating out areas of compatibility—the one Creator God, the finality of Revelation, the confinement of man to the human condition, a style of religious behavior coloring if not determining social and political mores, these positions and postures represent so many positive and negative affinities that would render possible absorption of some and compel rejection of other

elements in the intellectual universe of Greek Christendom, Greek philosophy, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and later, Hinduism, most alien of all systems encountered.<sup>4</sup>

The fundamental "options" had been made irrevocably when the Empire was established; they had not been lived and thought through; their problematics had not yet been fully explored or even experienced; and they needed formulation. This formulation, tied as it was to the circumstances which created the need for it, reflected the challenges against which the Muslim identity had to be realized; "Islamicity" itself was affected and, on the whole, enlarged and enriched by contacts whose dangers were neutralized by the double compactness of Arab power and Arab solidarity.

To the Arabs, the new religion had opened new ways of self-realization. It had made possible social, cultural and, first of all, political and religious achievements, from curbing of the corrosive particularism of the tribes (whose resurgence was to contribute in no small measure to the early displacement of the Arabs from imperial leadership) to the winning of an empire buttressed by the religious unity of the rulers; and it had allowed to sweep aside an obsolete societal setting by helping the townsman to supremacy over the nomad and rural settler. The attraction of power on one hand, fissures, ethnic, religious and social, within the conquered territories on the other, compensated for a certain intellectual rawness. Neither at the founding of the caliphal empire nor, for example, at the decisive arrival of the Muslims in India, almost four centuries later, was Islam associated with the culturally leading local stratum or was able immediately to furnish such a stratum from its own recruits. But this initial culture differential did not impair the spread of Islam; it was, besides, overcome fairly soon by dint of a process of attraction and ingestion which left the continuity of the community intact, making it in fact the more self-assured as the basis of identity shifted from the political to the cultural sphere.

The absence of a competing power gave Islam the time to

<sup>4</sup> The syncretistic movements in seventeenth and eighteenth century India although affecting in large measure Muslims and Hindus who, in the last analysis, did share the same cultural background bear out, by their failure, the alienness of the fundamental outlook of the two religious groups; they have resulted in a keener *prise de conscience* of their spiritual individuality and hence have tended to accentuate separateness and antipathy.

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consolidate. Consolidation, in this context, has two aspects. (a) The creation of a large and continuous domain which under the logistic conditions of the age was practically self-sufficient, drawing its political motivations overwhelmingly from within; (b) the implementation of that universalism which was inherent in the original message but found itself in rivalry with a conception of Islam as preserve, prerogative or privilege of the Arabs (and their military associates in rulership), a conception which, apart from the realities of the seventh century, had some Koranic support to point to but which, in the last analysis, confused the circumstances of revelation with its ultimate intent. In fact, the consciousness of this universalism, i.e., the appropriateness of the faith and its practices to all mankind and its corollary, its detachment from the conditions of its original locale, was developed early and is traceable in explicit statement to no later than the ninth century (and probably sooner).

(3) To the outsider Islam appeared above all as a style of life identifying a community. The very grouping of its principal beliefs and obligations accentuated the devotional act and community practice. This practice would accommodate local custom but more importantly perhaps, be open to various types of religious experience: the security of legalistic and ritualistic regulation as much as the submergence of the barrier between creature and Creator in communal ecstasy or the relentless self-subjugation of the ascetic bent on that divine mercy which can never be merited and held with certainty. Infringement on divine unity, the negation of prophecy or the assertion of its continuance and renewal past the death of Muhammad, explicit denial of the authority of Scripture and the Prophet, and separation from the community—these were the unforgivable grounds of exclusion. Behavior proved belonging. Theology, however sophisticated and specific it was to become, and the Law with all its shrewd precision, never succeeded in abolishing the latitudinarian localism of the community whose actual differentiation from country to country, school to school, only rarely affected (before modern times) an intense feeling of cohesiveness, remarkable especially in view of the size of the community and its lack of formal organization.

The Muslim style of life eliminated the remnants of the Graeco-

Roman, though to some extent incorporating it, and the Iranian insofar as it tended to an independent posture, blended uncertainly with the Latin and Germanic in Spain, and clashed for ineffectual domination with Hinduism. In a less conspicuous manner its impact broke against the older Armenian and Georgian cultures, barricaded as they were behind their languages and the religious tradition of Christianity that had become inseparable from ethnic and national identity. Political domination was both too erratic and unrewarding to expose Georgians and Armenians to that sustained pressure which alone could have shattered their resistance. Islam had nothing to offer. It did not come as liberator from prolonged sectarian tribulation, its bearers were culturally strangers and racially as alien as the Byzantine and Persian attackers had been.

Pirenne has been criticized for charging the Arab conquest of the Eastern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean with the final breakup of the Mediterranean unity which was the greatest achievement and the heartpiece of the Roman Empire, and the subsequent northward turn of the Carolingian state; it was pointed out that trade, especially luxury trade, continued, the pilgrims visited the Holy Land as before, and that it was much sooner than the emergence of Arab Islam that the basic economic and political changes occurred which were to result in the shrunk outreach of the Germanic Middle Ages as contrasted with even the last stages of the Western Roman Empire. Yet it cannot be denied that the establishment of Muslim control eliminated the Latin and, in terms of cultural interaction across the sea, rendered ineffective the Greek centers on the long North African coastline; nor can it be denied that Muslim control resulted in the development of an autonomous zone that received its determining impulses from the East and whose principal concern with the Mediterranean was to extend domination; and even this impulse was irregular and tended to weaken after the conquest of Sicily. Besides, the contacts of raids and piracy, a modicum of dispensable trade and voyaging, in no way compensated for that unity of the Mediterranean which was, in a sense, the basic and the decisive fact of the Graeco-Roman period. From the seventh century onward the Mediterranean is divided among three culture areas and never less than three sovereign powers whose kinship is in

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their cultural ancestry and spiritual aspiration, but that do their best to encroach upon, and, failing this, to insulate one another.<sup>5</sup>

There has not been enunciated a Pirenne thesis in regard to the steppes and forests north of the Caucasus; it would presumably be difficult to argue for political isolation and economic and cultural decline in what is now European Russia as a result of the Muslim advance to Derbend. In fact, the connections between Iran and the North (or Northwest) do not seem to have suffered; if anything, trade and the import of artifacts would seem to have increased.<sup>6</sup> But it suffices to read the report of an Ibn Fadlān (921/22) and au Abū Hāmid of Granada (1080/81-1169/70; the relevant travels extend with interruptions from 1131 to 1153) to realize the distance between the culture of the North and the culture(s) of Islam. The Arab travellers report in a tone one might use of savage and at best, of strange and bewildering men and peoples. Where there are Muslims they are recipients not contributors; they are, in every sense of the word, on the outside, and no urge is felt to win those lands for the faith. Beyond the orbit of Turkic groups affinity to Islam appears to end. The pagan culture of the North is still intact and when it succumbs it yields to Christian encirclement. The ruthless self-assurance of the Norseman is reminiscent of the ruthless self-assurance of the early Arab conqueror. The same fascination of power that surrounded the Arab Muslims radiated from the Northern conquerors of Russia. The superiority of Byzantium emerged from bitter testing. No shared spirituality drew together two areas that geography and the limitative stabilization of Islam tended to keep apart.

<sup>5</sup> It is perfectly true that most major traits of the early Middle Ages in the West, economically as well as culturally, were in evidence way before the Arab invasion. But this invasion made the Tyrrhenian Sea into a frontier and the southern (and eastern) coastlands of the Mediterranean into foreign country—in point of mores, language, culture, religion, style of public and private life. The underlying similarities would not have sufficed to make the visitor from Christendom feel at home. Marc Bloch succeeded in evoking the significance of the change brought about by the Muslim conquest in one brief and balanced page; cf. "Une Mise au point: les invasions," *Mélanges historiques* (Paris, 1963), I, 110-141, at pp. 122-123.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the article, rich in references, by T. Lewicki, "Il commercio arabo con la Russia e con i paesi slavi d'Occidente nei secoli IX-XI," *Istituto Universitario orientale di Napoli, Annali*, n.s., VIII (1958), 47-61.





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# THE CONQUEST

*Christian Décobert*

[57] For the purpose of understanding some aspects of the history of nascent Islam, it is necessary to assess all the implications of the two following statements. On the one hand the diffusion of Islam was not, like that of Christianity, a slow and tenacious movement of infiltration and seepage into the interior of an empire which it claimed to have no intention of touching; it was in itself imperial. It was at the outset an episode of violence, a conquest of land and of people. On the other hand, the Arab conquest and migration were chronologically distinct and should be logically distinguished. The former is the hegemonic extension of a community basing itself on a prophetic revelation; the second is merely a subsequent movement of populations. The formulation of these two statements – linked intimately one with the other, it goes without saying – aspires to be neither polemical nor original. It does not prevent the revelation of these facts being presented in the most evident fashion to all those who are interested in the subject, to say nothing of the multiple inferential propositions which they should raise. In a word, the facts themselves were not always retained, that which they signified was not always considered.

A rapid, scintillating conquest: much has been written about the mode and the scansion of the penetration of these bodies of troops into the Syrian plains, into the marshes of the Euphrates, to the furthest reaches of the Iranian plateau, to the north of the Nile, on the littoral of [58] white Africa, and as far as the Iberian Peninsula... The dates, the battles are known. The historical atlases and general works on Islam (Cahen: 1970;<sup>1</sup> Mantran: 1969;<sup>2</sup> Sourdél & Sourdél-Thomine: 1968<sup>3</sup>) depict a prodigious advance in various eloquent maps. There is no point in harking back to this. On the other hand, there are questions which are still to be posed: in what conditions, intrinsic to the groups of conquerors, did the conquest come about and, as a corollary, who precisely were these conquerors. The answers so far proposed have been of

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<sup>1</sup> C. Cahen, *L'Islam, des origines au début de l'empire ottoman*, Paris 1970.

<sup>2</sup> R. Mantran, *L'expansion musulmane (VII<sup>e</sup>–XI<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Paris 1969.

<sup>3</sup> D. Sourdél & J. Sourdél-Thomine, *La Civilisation de l'Islam classique*, Paris 1968.

several types. They may lay emphasis on the accidental nature of the event – the conquest would be a kind of flight in advance, a more or less controlled reaction to a series of perceived factors: impoverishment, desiccation of Arabia (Caetani: 1911<sup>4</sup>), closure of commercial networks in southern Arabia and the quest for prosperity in the Fertile Crescent (Shaban: 1971<sup>5</sup>). Or on the contrary, it is a positive trait that is put forward, in terms of its absence among those whom the Arabs conquered: existence of fast cavalry and more generally, military superiority (Lammens: 1928;<sup>6</sup> Canard: 1926<sup>7</sup>). But it can happen that the thing regarded as the motivation for their migration is more of a permanent, atavistic aptitude of the Arabs – one which defines them – than a contingent quality, valid for one time and in precise circumstances (thus it could be with the military superiority): the penchant for plunder, the taste for booty, the passion of the raid (Muir: 1898<sup>8</sup>; Lammens: 1928<sup>9</sup>). Socio-political factors, linked to the religious revolution that Arabia experienced, are elsewhere presented as the genuine motivations behind the Arab expansion: enthusiasm of a neophyte group, promise of salvation, of divine reward (Butzer: 1957;<sup>10</sup> Bousquet: 1956<sup>11</sup>). A final mode of response which, quantitatively, we cannot ignore, comes back to say that in the final analysis there is some truth in each of the preceding explanations and that we should neither belittle nor exaggerate the religious aspect, that the economic factor also has its laws, but that at the same time the relative military weakness of the Byzantines and the Sasanids must be taken into account (Cahen: 1970;<sup>12</sup> Mantran: 1969<sup>13</sup>). This solution has the advantage of avoiding recourse to the single principle which explains all, whether it be a non-historical definition of the object (the marauding Arabs: [59] but what is it that makes it so, that in the seventh century precisely, this permits them to consume towns and provinces?) or a historically decisive but simply stated characteristic (military superiority: but why at this specific moment?). Similarly it declines to endorse a category which would be dressed up in the double mask of function and

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<sup>4</sup> L. Caetani, *Studi di Storia Orientale*, I, Milan 1911.

<sup>5</sup> M.A. Shaban, *Islamic History: a New Interpretation*, I, Cambridge 1971.

<sup>6</sup> M. Lammens, *L'Arabie occidentale*, Beirut 1928.

<sup>7</sup> M. Canard, *Les expéditions des Arabes contre Constantinople dans l'histoire et dans la légende in Journal Asiatique (JA)* 108 (1926), 61–121.

<sup>8</sup> W. Muir, *The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall*, London 1898.

<sup>9</sup> See note 6.

<sup>10</sup> K.W. Butzer, *Der Umweltfactor in der grossen arabischen Expansion*, in *Saeculum* 8 (1957), 359–371.

<sup>11</sup> G.H. Bousquet, *Observations sur la nature et les causes de la conquête arabe*, in *Studia Islamica (SI)* 6 (1956), 37–52.

<sup>12</sup> See note 1.

<sup>13</sup> See note 2.

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cause (the religious, political, economic, technical...) Conversely, such a mitigated reasoning, which deals with each area and does not decide, often has the defect of juxtaposing levels of explanation without seeking to integrate them. For fear of falling into the trap of a single factor from which everything proceeds, one ultimately misses what could have been significant.

Returning to the more definitive responses, as a reminder and making no judgment, one could retain certain key-words: military conquest, booty, economic gain, religious revolution. I would at the outset defend the following proposition. The Arabs who invaded Byzantine Syria and Sasanid Mesopotamia were neither savage and dusty hordes of bandits greedy for booty, nor hungry gangs fleeing from poverty, nor merchants in search of new networks, but warriors first and foremost, few in number and highly disciplined. The conquest was not the result of a series of fortuitous accidents but a warlike machine, which preceded and determined the Arab migration. It was the process whereby a community was constituted and consolidated, uniting in the same war the various populations of Arabia.

A relatively assiduous and attentive reading of the Arabic sources gives, in fact, a full illustration of the phenomenon of the conquest. An illustration which has, for present purposes, the eminent merit of articulating together the actions of social structuring which had forged the Arab milieu of pre-Islam, the practice of Muslim preaching and the realisation of a warlike political project. The rapid survey which follows will be based on a recent study (Donner: 1981<sup>14</sup>), but equally, will often diverge from it. Certain aspects of this survey will be reviewed at greater length at a later stage.<sup>15</sup>

Before Islam, two Arabias were in opposition, a central Arabia and a peripheral Arabia. In the centre, in the arid regions, [60] a more or less loose system of tribal confederations was organised around petty aristocracies. Among the nomads, albeit the minority, these élites firmly welded together a warlike function and a religious investment. Among the sedentary, their religious role consisted in the control of sacred territories (*haram-s*), commercialised sanctuaries, places of pilgrimage. The sedentaries had succeeded in asserting their authority over the nomads and semi-nomads who set out on pilgrimages from urbanised centres and generally observed the rules of a circulation of goods managed by their mercantile élites. Mecca was, in the time of Muḥammad, the most visible of these centres of attraction.

<sup>14</sup> F. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton 1981.

<sup>15</sup> This is not only a method of investigation, it is also, for me, a method of exposition, returning constantly to the same subject and restating it – returning after a detour, having gleaned some new information or finding myself obliged to take a slightly different view. There are many repetitions, but they are never exact repetitions.

At the periphery, towards the South in the wealthier region of Yemen, to the East and to the extreme North, certain aristocracies had been moved, under the influence of exterior federalising tendencies (the Byzantine and Sasanid empires, into the status of small kingdoms, either vassal (Lakhmid, Ghassānid) or largely autonomous (Himyarite).

The policy of the Prophet Muḥammad was simultaneously to preserve, to a certain extent, the power of the aristocracies, and to create a new conception of social linkage. A community (*umma*), hitherto quite unheard of, was founded on the law of one God and in opposition to the common *lex talionis*. It was considered by its founder to be stable, unlike the federations which made and unmade themselves (*lā hilfa fī l-islām* says the tradition, there will be no federation in Islam, in other words: Islam as a society would be one). And the empire of this community was to be established equally on each of its constituents. To realise this, Muḥammad founded a *haram* in Medina – on the model of the ancient *haram*-s – of which the only chieftain was he himself; where new recruits offered allegiance, where alliances were concluded with the chieftains of other cities, on payment of an obligatory tax (*zakāt*: sacred levy and token of allegiance) against the promise of reward. And above all, a rigorous system of taxation seems to have been rapidly imposed on the tribes, through the services of agent-collectors (*‘ummāl*).

A new aristocracy was established very quickly. At the summit, there were the emigrants from Mecca (*muhājirūn*) and the Medinan auxiliaries (*ansār*). Nevertheless the sedentary élites, even those fervently [61] opposed to the Prophet at the start of his preaching career, were subsequently not only integrated into the community (*umma*), but also awarded responsibilities there of the highest importance. On a broader basis, the sedentaries were explicitly welcomed into the charismatic community and rewarded with gifts (gifts “to attract hearts”) in exchange for their allegiance. So, after this second level of the hierarchy, that of the sedentary and sedentarised allies, there was the inferior level, that of the nomads: they were the least trustworthy, the ones most naturally removed from the stable system of community links which Muḥammad aspired to create. The latter did not succeed in integrating them entirely. The wars which Abū Bakr, the first caliph, conducted against a number of them, “wars of apostasy” (*ridda*: term actually denoting the refusal to pay tax on the part of nomads who felt themselves no longer bound to a structure whose founder, Muḥammad, was dead), were no more than a gesture of consolidation of what was beginning to be a “community” and of its internal hierarchy.

F. Donner, meanwhile, suggests an antagonism between nomads and sedentaries which to me does not seem at all plausible. While it is accepted

that economic rivalries were not lacking and that, more specifically, the caravans organised by the sedentaries hardly lent themselves to the razzias which constituted, to a greater or lesser extent, the livelihood of a number of nomadic tribes, while it is therefore true that the sedentaries felt a great deal of mistrust regarding these tribes (a mistrust reflected even in the Qur'ān – IX, 97, 101, for example), this does not mean that the two worlds were really separate and antithetical. And, when tackling the descriptions of their leaders, it is hard to maintain that for the nomads they were warlike, and for the sedentaries, religious. Anticipating a future discussion, it should at this point be affirmed that the Arab nomads and sedentaries lived in one and the same world, and that the warlike and religious functions, far from being dichotomous, existed in close conjunction. However our guide touches an essential point with the relationship that he establishes between the religious function of the leaderships and their attachment to a sacred territory (*haram*). Furthermore he is right to insist on Muḥammad's awareness [62] of this fact. That which the Meccan Prophet effectively retained from the Arab – and not strictly city-based/ sedentary – milieu, reproducing and accentuating it at Medina, was the connection with sacred territory of collective ownership (*haram*) of organic units of people (tribe, lineage). Muḥammad found in the *haram* that which could found a new community. He adopted the religious values of his milieu, while transforming them, while changing their sense.

Going further, F. Donner makes this split, fundamental in his opinion, between nomads and sedentaries the tension from which, by circuitous means, a political entity could be realised. It is certain that the sedentary chieftains were the leaders of the Muslim movement, equally so that the nomads were reduced and recruited to fight wars outside Arabia. It appears however that our author veers off course and that some thread has been lost along the way. An intuition perhaps has not been sufficiently analysed – and it concerns this question of the Meccan and Medinan *haram*-s. We have here in effect, with the recourse by Muḥammad to the creation of a *haram*, an example of the immediate mode of religious organization. In other words, for the convert to the new way, reference to the sacred was expressed, in a manner which requires precise analysis, by reference to specific territories and to those who controlled them. Now, this took place at a time when a discourse was making itself heard, arguing the case for strict monotheism (a single God, creator). And it is convenient to suppose that this discourse was, in some way, homogenous with the type of reference to the sacred and to the procedures of mediation in foreign affairs, engendered by conservative recourse to the *haram*. If then there is to be talk of the political construction that was realised around the Medinan and Meccan sedentary leaderships, if it is to be stated

as a fact that the one or the ones through whom the event came about – Muḥammad and his first companions – were at least the carriers of a certain religious discourse (on the divine), it would seem to be methodologically prudent to propose the hypothesis, that engaging in this discourse conditioned the formation of the political structure in question. When it is admitted, on the other hand, that these leaderships had something to do with a sacral function linked to the management of sacred territories, [63] we can find here a possible articulation, if this is wanted, between the domain of the religious (of discourse and of rite) and that of politics (of the structuring of society around a centre of power). At the outset, the simple fact of the existence of *haram*-s should be given close consideration. It is not irrelevant to make the comment, again, that in these places warlike and religious function were intimately conjoined.

We revert here to the facts. The campaigns from Arabia and the battles in Syria and Iraq certainly corresponded to a double strategy of integration: strategy of the nomads, whose interests clearly lay in submitting to the Medinan chiefs and profiting from booty, and the strategy of the Medinan chieftains, which consisted in keeping these troops enthusiastic for conquest, deploying them, training them and controlling them completely. The conquest and the first Arab settlement which ensued show, in fact, that after a brief period of mistrust towards the nomads who had rebelled and been subdued, general mobilisation was possible, giving a new impetus to the expansion and facilitating a push well beyond the Euphrates.

The troops of the conquest were not disorganised hordes, descending on the Syrian countryside or the ancient cities of the Euphrates. According to the Arab historians, a vigorous discipline, unified command, a separation both military (in branches: archers, cavalry, vanguard, wing...) and tribal (by factions) in relatively small units, gave them remarkable effectiveness in confrontation with heavy enemy contingents, often composed of mercenaries. Added to all this was regular pay, and assured profits.<sup>16</sup>

We may say, likewise, that the first settlements in Syria and in Iraq were the activities of these hardly numerous “militaries” and the genuine and mass migration came at a later stage.

All considered, was the conquest the process whereby a state, seen as a religious movement, was born, consolidated itself, and integrated the populations of Arabia, starting with the sedentaries and their mercantile élites, followed by the nomads? Was it more than this, or indeed less?

<sup>16</sup> We shall see this at a later stage (I.2) The very fact that there had been salaries, and an authority to administer them, since the years following the first movement of conquest outside Arabia, is treated as an indirect reason by Arab historians.

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Certainly, it can be said that the Arabs of Islam owed only to themselves, to the policy of their Prophet and of their first caliphs, the foundation of an [64] empire: a policy which was the centralised unification of the Arabs and which, to realise this, projected them outside Arabia. Certainly, the picture sketched by F. Donner is appropriate for those who have attempted to situate the Arab conquest not as an epiphenomenon or the effect of a cause totally exterior to itself, but as a political realisation whereby a new structure of power was constructed. However, the issue seems to be simultaneously thicker and broader, thinner and more tenuous.

More tenuous, because the sources which inform us so promptly are neither reliable nor, more importantly, sufficient. While it appears that the conquerors were disciplined, organised, it has not been established that a pre-existing and firmly established political structure controlled them. While it is true that they travelled towards the Euphrates as well as towards Syria, it is not certain that these two movements were programmed by an omnipresent ʿUmar Ibn al-Khattāb. The sources are late and demand considerable prudence on the part of the historian. To propose the existence, contemporaneously with the Prophet, of a kind of state (which decided to go to war) seems to be more the effect of a re-reading made by the Arab informants themselves than the plain reality. It is perhaps unwise to affirm that a recognised sovereign authority, a coercive and unifying apparatus, could have existed even before the conquest – it is moreover not much easier (however serious the attempt: Donner: 1986<sup>17</sup>) to find manifestations of this for the beginning of the Umayyad era, or several decades after the first conquering wave.

On the other hand, on the history of western Arabia in the early seventh century, the most sceptical of historians accept as authentic or highly plausible certain facts: the emergence of a radical monotheism, the formation at Yathrib of a community (*umma*) consisting of immigrants and autochthones (Athamina: 1987<sup>18</sup>), the creation of a sacred space marking the communal existence, the existence of a chieftain called Muḥammad, the attraction of Arab tribes towards this new centre. If we fall back prudently on these few facts and, on the other hand, consider what it is possible to know about western Arabia at that time, about its social and religious organisation (power of chieftains and sacred areas, economic aspects [65] of alliances...) it is permissible to assert that a minimum of internal cohesion effectively existed prior to the war of conquest undertaken by these Arab groups who had

<sup>17</sup> F. Donner, *The Formation of the Islamic State*, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (JAOS) 106–2 (1986), 283–296.

<sup>18</sup> K. Athamina, *Aʿrāb and Muḥājirūn in the environment of Amsār*, in *SI* 66 (1987), 5–25.



rallied to Muḥammad or to his successors, and that this [war of conquest] considerably reinforced an external cohesion – a disparity in comparison with others – [that was] probably weak at the outset.

But the issue of conquest also seems larger than as defined by F. Donner, because, in contradiction to the assertion of these same sceptics (cf. Serjeant: 1964,<sup>19</sup> 3–4) the Arab community that was formed at Yathrib-Medina was religious, a point to which I will often return; it involved itself little by little in a consistent monotheism, and it was in the process of transforming itself in these terms. Also the war of conquest, and this is for the moment only a starting hypothesis, must have shared in its religious values, ancient and modern. To paraphrase Clausewitz, the war was not only a political act, the reproductive act of a new society, it was also a political instrument, the instrument of asserting of a specific form of monotheism. The construction of a new political entity – which we shall call nascent Islam – and what engendered it, i.e. the phenomenon of conquest, were certainly more than the solution of a tension between antagonistic groups by the formation of a state which subsumed them and controlled their aggression and projected this tension towards the exterior. Not having fully considered the importance of what he proposed (sacred territories and chiefdoms, conservative measures of the Prophet), F. Donner definitively situated his comprehension of the conquest somewhat outside what he had set in motion in his researches.

If it is commonly admitted that the attraction of Arab tribes towards Medina was a communal reality, and if there was subsequently a dispersion which did not negate this reality, because it had become so durable, it is appropriate to accept that it became a fact of reflection, in terms of which the history of the tribes, past and present, should be understood. And this reflection comes to be articulated in a discourse of the conquest. In effect, the terms used to speak of the conquest themselves became values, in the Durkheimian sense of the word, that constituted a religious language. And this process was possible because there was a hiatus – certainly chronological and [66] soon reflexive – between the conquest and the Arab migration, because there was thus the possibility of isolating the conquest and the possibility of describing it. Finally, and only finally, came the state as a moral institution, and the institutions.

Having taken the decision, which is certainly disputable, to proceed in a recurrent manner, I shall begin by reviewing the facts which are the material for those who are interested in the phenomenon of the conquest and the establishment of the Arabs in the conquered regions. In the mass of

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<sup>19</sup> R.B. Serjeant, *The Constitution of Medina*, in *Islamic Quarterly* (IQ) 8 (1964) 3–16.

documentation at our disposal, attention should first of all be given to that which assists understanding of the relations which the conquerors and their immediate descendants maintained with the conquered and subjugated populations. What in fact could be more revelatory of the manner of living, thinking and self-representation of a group than its way of behaving vis-à-vis others, vis-à-vis those whom it considers foreign?

It will thus not be a question, in this section, of describing the Arab management of the conquered countries, nor of laying stress on taxation and the system which the Arabs put in place to levy from the inhabitants of these countries a proportion of their goods, or even considering in itself the organisation of the redistribution of these goods in the Arab milieu; numerous studies of these points have been published, to which reference is made in the bibliography *in fine*. The course followed here has no other concern than to clarify the image of the relations between the Arab group and the group considered subjugated. This free approach does not exhaust any of the issues encountered (administration, fiscality, circulation of goods). On the other hand, and to address a question of methodology, it seems reasonable to use, directly and through cross-referencing, the different categories of documentation (archaeological, papyrological, literary, Qur'anic, kerygmatic): the purpose being to reconcile the two figures, too drastically dissociated, of the "warrior in the way of God" (religious figure) and of the "conquering Arab" (historic figure). The origin of this manner of being, in relation to the self and to others, can, subsequently and in a more leisurely fashion, be explored (chaps. II and IV).



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## ANOTHER ORIENTALIST'S REMARKS CONCERNING THE PIRENNE THESIS

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By now fifty years have elapsed since the initial publication of Henri Pirenne's brilliant concepts regarding the causes of the decay of the Ancient order in Western Europe<sup>1</sup>). His provocative contributions to Medieval European history are sufficiently influential to warrant further comments today<sup>2</sup>). In my view, however, the half-a-century old debate, stimulated by his controversial ideas, has suffered from two shortcomings. First, although the validity of Pirenne's thesis depended decisively on a proper understanding of the Moslem Near East and its relations with Europe in the early Middle Ages, no specialists in the field of Islamic history—three isolated instances excepting—made themselves heard on the polemical subject. And second, although the impact of the dramatic changes in the Near East on the situation in Western Europe has constituted the focal issue in the Pirennean controversy, nobody has raised the question of the immediate effect of the Arab victory upon the economic conditions in the Near East itself.

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1) H. Pirenne, 'Mahomet et Charlemagne', *Revue belge de philologie et de l'histoire*, 1. 1922, p. 77-86.

2) For a summation of several opinions concerning the validity of H. Pirenne's thesis see Anne Riising, 'The Fate of Henri Pirenne's Theses on the Consequences of the Islamic Expansion,' *Classica et Medievalia*, 13, 1952, p. 87-130; also, Alfred F. Havighurst, ed., *The Pirenne Thesis, Analysis, Criticism, and Revision*, Boston, 1958.

The three exceptional instances involved the contributions of professional Orientalist scholars: Daniel C. Dennett, Jr., <sup>1)</sup> Claude Cahen <sup>2)</sup>, and more recently, Elie Ashtor <sup>3)</sup>. Cahen's article concerned itself primarily with the methodological aspects of the role of Moslem coinage in the commercial relations between the Near East and Europe <sup>4)</sup>. Furthermore, it concentrated on the advanced stage of Near Eastern economic expansion, rather than on the situation which had arisen shortly after the subjugation of the near East by the Caliphate. On the other hand, Dennett and Ashtor addressed themselves, even if not exclusively, to the central issue of the causal relationship between the expansion of Islam and the collapse of the traditional order in Western Europe.

Dennett rejected Pirenne's interpretation of the Near Eastern role in the European decay. According to Dennett, the profound changes in early Medieval Europe should not be attributed to adverse economic trends—especially in the sphere of trans-Mediterranean commerce—which were allegedly generated by a hostile policy of the victorious Moslem regime. To quote Dennett: "There is no evidence to prove that the Arabs either desired to close, or actually did close the Mediterranean to the commerce of the West either in the seventh or eighth centuries <sup>5)</sup>".

1) 'Pirenne and Muhammad,' *Speculum*, 23, 1948, p. 165-190.

2) 'Quelques problèmes concernant l'expansion économique musulmane au Haut Moyen Age,' *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, 12, 1965, p. 391-432.

3) 'Quelques observations d'un Orientaliste sur la thèse de Pirenne,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 13, 1970, p. 166-194; also, 'Nouvelles réflexions sur la thèse de Pirenne,' *Revue suisse d'histoire*, 20, 1970, p. 601-607.

4) The problem of the bearing of Moslem coinage on monetary developments in Western Europe was discussed by a number of 'Occidentalists', e.g. S. Bolin, 'Mohammed, Charlemagne and Ruric,' *The Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 1, 1953, p. 5-39; C. M. Cipolla, 'Sans Mahomet, Charlemagne est inconcevable,' *Annales (Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations)* 17, 1962, p. 130-136; J. Duplessy, 'La circulation des monnaies arabes en Europe occidentale du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Revue Numismatique*, V<sup>e</sup> série, 18, 1956, p. 101-163; Ph. Grierson, 'The monetary reforms of 'Abd al-Malik. Their metrological basis and their financial repercussions,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 3, 1960, p. 241-264; Fr. Himly, 'Y a-t-il emprise musulmane sur l'économie des États européens du VIII<sup>e</sup> au X<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Revue suisse d'histoire*, 5, 1955, p. 31-81.

5) D. C. Dennett, Jr., *art. cit.*, p. 189.

A different position was taken by Ashtor. Having focused his observations on the problem of the Mediterranean trade in the ninth and early tenth centuries—i.e., the period of the Carolingian state in the West, and of the domination of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate in the East—he has concluded that the volume of transit trade moving across Italy and Spain was „très réduit ou même infime<sup>1)</sup>”. One of the main factors behind this decline was general maritime insecurity prevailing in the Mediterranean because of the almost incessant warfare involving Byzantine and Moslem fleets. In support of this argument, which is in agreement with the main thrust of Pirenne’s thesis, Ashtor adduced evidence pointing to the rapid decadence of Syrian and Egyptian coastal towns in the wake of the victory of the Arabs<sup>2)</sup>.

But neither Dennett, nor Cahen, nor Ashtor has ever claimed that his contribution offered all that the Orientalists could and should state on the subject of the Pirennean dispute. The current increase in interest and research in the field of Medieval Near Eastern economic history<sup>3)</sup> seems to portend that a more comprehensive interpretation of the historical role of Moslem Near East in the formation of Medieval Europe would soon be forthcoming.

In the meantime, however, I wish to make a few observations of my own on the Pirennean thesis in the context of Medieval Near Eastern economic history. Although based on solid heuristic foundations, my remarks, like those of Pirenne and of his supporters and adversaries, are speculative in nature. Perhaps they will not add much to the quality level of the Pirennean debate, but at least they will increase by 25% the number of Orientalists actively participating in the famous controversy.

If, as postulated by Pirenne, the alleged cessation of the Mediterranean trade had been capable of ruining Europe it would have produced similar consequences, if not even more disastrous consequences,

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1) E. Ashtor, ‘Quelques observations . . .,’ p. 188; also, *idem*, ‘Nouvelles réflexions . . .,’ p. 602.

2) *Idem*, ‘Quelques observations . . .,’ p. 170; ‘Nouvelles réflexions . . .,’ p. 605.

3) Cf., M. Cook, ed., *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day*, London, 1970.

for the Near Eastern economy. International commerce in the Near East gave its society important benefits from the lucrative transit trade, as well as import and export transactions which flowed across that strategic area connecting European markets with Africa, India, and Far East and South East Asia <sup>1)</sup>. For that very reason, the economic policy of the Arabs in the conquered territories—especially their indifference to or their interference with trade—was of crucial importance to the Near East, and only secondarily to Western Europe.

Although the economic and social fate of the Near East in the Middle Ages, and by extension that of Western Europe, depended on the fundamental decisions of the Caliphate in the seventh and early eight centuries, their historical significance has not been incisively interpreted or persuasively explained. The conflicting opinions of Dennett and Ashtor may serve as an illustration. "There is no evidence to prove that the Arabs . . . desired to close . . . the Mediterranean to the commerce of the West either in the seventh or eighth centuries" stated Dennett <sup>2)</sup>. On the contrary! There exists textual evidence explicitly proving that the Arab regime insisted on freedom of maritime trade. It consists of a separate article in the solemn fiscal decree issued between A.D. 717-720 by Caliph 'Umar II, proclaiming: "As for the sea, we hold that its way is the way of the dry land. God hath said: 'God it is Who hath subdued to you the sea that the vessels may sail thereon by His command and that ye may seek of His bounty!' Therefore He hath given permission therein that who so wills may trade thereon; and I hold that we should place no obstacle between it and any one of the people. For dry land and sea belong alike to God; He hath subdued them to His servants to seek of His bounty for themselves in both of them. How then should we intervene between God's servants and their means of livelihood <sup>3)</sup>?"

Of course, it does not necessarily follow that the official governmental declaration in favor of the "open sea" policy constituted a

1) For a recent authoritative discussion of the significance of the Near East as transit area see J. Innes Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1969.

2) D. C. Dennett, Jr., *loc. cit.*

3) Cf., H. A. R. Gibb, 'The Fiscal Rescript of 'Umar II,' *Arabica*, 2, 1955, p. 6.

guarantee of healthy trade conditions. Indeed, the fact that 'Umar made such an unequivocal statement suggests that Mediterranean trade conditions left something to be desired.

As for Ashtor's opinion regarding the responsibility of maritime insecurity for dwindling Mediterranean commerce, one is tempted to reverse the alleged causal relationship. Could it be the maritime insecurity had resulted from a lack of interest on the part of "inter-continental" business to invest their capital in trans-Mediterranean operations? With Mediterranean trade thus becoming "*très réduit ou même infime* <sup>1)</sup>," Arab authorities had little motivation to commit their resources for the maintenance of strong naval forces and burdensome coastal fortresses and shipyards in Syria and Egypt. It is this factor which may well have accounted for the spread of insecurity in the Mediterranean, and which may have precipitated a rapid decline of formerly flourishing towns along the coast of Syria and Egypt.

Is it plausible to postulate that "inter-continental" commerce operating from the Near East, or using that area as its strategic transit zone, had lost interest in the markets to the north of the Mediterranean? Very definitely so. Indeed, one of the most significant results of the Arab victory on economic history was a natural, organic redirection of commercial activities in the sensitive area of the Near East, brought about by a specific fiscal policy of the new regime, and by the ensuing emergence of lucrative markets within the borders of the Caliphate. To understand the nature of that significant evolution one has to consider the basic aspects of the economic situation arising from the Arab domination in the Near East.

Unlike their effects in the sphere of politics, religion and culture, the victories of the Arabs and the establishment of the Caliphate did not result in any drastic or revolutionary changes in the economic life of Near Eastern society. As in pre-Islamic times, agriculture, artisan production, and internal and external commerce, as well as the institution of metallic currency, continued as the basic features of the economy of the Near East. Moreover, the entire tax base survived

1) E. Ashtor, 'Quelques observations . . .,' p. 188.



virtually intact in spite of the downfall of the Sāsānid monarchy and the expulsion of the Byzantine hierarchy. The main reason for such developments was the non-destructive character of the great conquest. Certainly, battles were fought and some cities endured prolonged siege operations, but in general the dramatic takeover was accomplished without substantial losses by the tax-paying civilian population or by revenue-yielding establishments.

A major transformation, however, occurred in the nature of the executive power structure of Near Eastern fiscal organization. State revenue was no longer administered by two different and mutually hostile imperial treasuries, the Byzantine in Constantinople and the Sāsānid in Ctesiphon. Responsibility for determining the nature of taxation, for the system of collection as well as for the allocation of the revenue, was taken over by one central and supreme financial institution, established by Caliph 'Umar I (A.D. 634-644), to serve the needs of the Caliphate<sup>1)</sup>. The way in which the new administration discharged its fiscal responsibility during the initial period of its existence proved to be instrumental in ushering in a new and dynamic era in the history of Near Eastern economy.

As regards the level of taxation and the method of tax collection, the policy of the Caliphate towards the conquered areas was characterized by conservative moderation. Except for minor local modifications Arab conquerors did not interfere initially with the system or systems of taxation inherited from their predecessors<sup>2)</sup>. It was in the matters of distribution of the accumulated wealth that the policy of the early Caliphate acquired a truly innovative character. To understand the essence and implications of the drastic fiscal innovations one has to consider a demographic change which the Near East underwent in the wake of Arab victory.

As it happened, one of the outstanding demographic problems

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1) Cf., Matti I. Moosa, 'The diwān of 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb,' *Studies in Islam*, 2, 1965, p. 67-78; Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, *Der Diwān von 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb. Ein Beitrag zur frühislamischen Verwaltungsgeschichte*, 1970.

2) Cf., D. C. Dennett, Jr., *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, Cambridge, 1950.

of the Arab invasion was the mass immigration of the surplus population from the Arabian peninsula to the sedentarized zone of the Near East. It is true that certain segments of the Near Eastern sedentary population were displaced as a result of the Arab victory. (I refer to the Byzantine and Sāsānid ruling elite whose members were either expelled or exterminated by the Arabs). There is no doubt, however, that the number of the newcomers exceeded by far the displaced Byzantine and Sāsānid elements, for to accommodate the mass of Arab immigrants it was not enough to take over premises vacated by the ousted population. Indeed, entire new quarters had to be added to old towns, or completely new urban settlements had to be founded<sup>1</sup>). With the exception of a small minority, the mass of the Arab immigrants represented unskilled labor which under normal political and social conditions could hardly have been absorbed by or integrated with the local sedentary population of the Fertile Crescent without causing a major economic and social upheaval. As it was, that mass immigration did not impede normal economic activity. The healthy transitional integration was accomplished because of the introduction by the Caliphate of an unusual system of fiscal benefits, according to which all full-fledged members of the victorious Arab people were entitled to regular cash stipends, called *‘aṭā’*, in addition to their lower taxation rates<sup>2</sup>). Because of that ingenious system, the early Arab immigrants, far from being a liability, constituted a strongly subsidized social and ethnic group capable of growing economic roots in the new territories, with little disadvantage to the local labor or artisan force.

One may argue, of course, that the operation of the system of *‘aṭā’* constituted a fiscal burden on the local population. After all, the money distributed among the members of the privileged class was normally obtained from taxes imposed on the non-Arab Near Eastern

1) Cf., E. Reitemeyer, *Die Städtegründungen der Araber im Islam*, Leipzig, 1912; E. Pauty, 'Villes spontanées et villes créées en Islam,' *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales* (Algér), 9, 1951, p. 52-75.

2) Cf., Cl. Cahen, *‘‘Aṭā’*, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, i/729-730; A. S. Tritton, 'Notes on the Muslim System of Pensions,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 16, 1954, p. 170-172; Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, *op. cit.*

population. But as stated above, the conquerors did not levy any taxes that the population of the Near East had not been paying for the benefit of the earlier political regimes. Like the Byzantines and the Sāsānids before, the Arab conquerors assumed responsibility for maintaining political and administrative cohesiveness in Near Eastern territories. Unlike pre-Islamic times, no center of political and administrative gravity enjoying jurisdiction over Near Eastern territories, was located outside the Near East, as had been the case of Rome and Constantinople. Consequently, none of the monies collected by the Caliphate supported an external capital and its policies, but by means of the 'aṭā' system, all of them were retained, re-invested, diffused for the benefit of the local Near Eastern population.

It is obvious that the rise of a political and administrative power structure in the central regions of the Near East, in Syria under the Umayyads and in Mesopotamia under the 'Abbāsids, was accompanied by a powerful injection of ready cash into the Near Eastern economy. In pre-Islamic times economic production in the Mediterranean provinces of the Near East had been geared to meet the needs of huge consumer centers such as Rome, and later Constantinople. Hence the importance of the coastal towns in Egypt and Syria. But with the establishment of the Arab regime, new consumer centers arose in the Near Eastern regions themselves. Arab settlers, whether ruling elite or members of rank and file, constituted a potent consumer class. By establishing themselves in the sedentarized lands of the Near East they necessarily generated a substantial increase in economic productivity. The expansion of old towns and proliferation of new urban settlements created a boom in the housing industry. Ashtor refers to the decline of some coastal cities, but he forgets to mention the foundation and growth of Fustāt in Egypt<sup>1)</sup>, or Ramlah in Palestine<sup>2)</sup>, of Baṣrah, Kūfah and Wāsiṭ in Mesopotamia<sup>3)</sup>, and of several other inland towns which came into prominence following the victory

1) Cf., J. Jomier, 'Fustāt,' *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, ii/957-959; G. T. Scanlon, 'Housing and Sanitation,' *The Islamic City*, Oxford, 1970, p. 179-194.

2) Cf., E. Reitemeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 73 f.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 11f; 29f; 46f.

of the Arabs. Some wealthy residents or protectors of various towns and communities encouraged refined architectural and artistic creativity. Monumental architecture or sumptuous mosaic decorations ceased to be a monopoly of the Sāsānids or of the Byzantines. Byzantine craftsmen were now employed in the construction of Islamic shrines<sup>1)</sup>.

Furthermore, the growth of the urban population generated a strong demand for food supplies, thus stimulating speculative agriculture and interest in acquisition of landed property<sup>2)</sup>. Likewise, internal trade benefited from the new situation by performing economic functions between the urban and rural population<sup>3)</sup>.

All these favorable economic trends were reflected in the concurrent monetary developments. The best known event in the monetary history of the period is the great reform of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (A.D. 685-715) who introduced trimetallic Arabic coinage (gold, silver, and copper, i.e. *dīnār*, *dirham*, and *fals*) to serve as the classical model for Near Eastern coinage production in the Middle Ages. Various numismatic and ideological ramifications of that reform have already received adequate scholarly attention<sup>4)</sup>, but not its internal economic implications. Maurice Lombard, who investigated the function of gold in the economic supremacy of the Moslem world, defined that particular phase of Moslem history (8th-9th centuries) as the age of administrative reforms, marked by the return to circulation of precious metals accumulated in church treasuries<sup>5)</sup>. He failed, however, to elaborate

1) O. Grabar, 'Islamic Art and Byzantium,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 1964, p. 69-88; also, H. A. R. Gibb, 'Arab-Byzantine Relations under the Umayyad Caliphate,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 12, 1958, p. 219-233.

2) Cf., Saleh A. Ali, 'Muslim Estates in Hijaz in the First Century A.D.,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2, 1959, p. 247-261; O. Grabar, 'Umayyad 'Palace' and the 'Abbāsid 'Revolution','' *Studia Islamica*, 18, 1963, p. 5-18, esp. p. 7-8; 14-15.

3) For the importance of the Near Eastern mercantile class in that early period see S. D. Goitein, 'The Rise of the Near Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times,' *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, 3, 1957, p. 583-604.

4) Cf., G. C. Miles, 'Dīnār,' *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, ii/297-299; *idem*, 'Dirham,' *ibid.*, ii/319-320; A. L. Udovitch, 'Fals,' *ibid.*, ii/768-769.

5) M. Lombard, 'Les bases monétaires d'une suprématie économique. L'or musulman du VII<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Annales (Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations)*, 2, 1947, p. 143-160.

on the economic justification behind the decision of the Arab administration to release vast quantities of gold, silver, and copper coins for the use of Near Eastern markets. Under normal conditions the volume of coinage in circulation represents the total value of economic activities a given society happens to be engaged in. In other words, the volume of coinage in use is regulated by the actual state of the economy. An expanding economy calls for an increase of coinage, a shrinking economy for its withdrawal, debasement or hoarding. And certainly, an indiscriminate release or oversupply of coinage, with its unavoidable inflationary consequences, is as disastrous for economy as ruthless over-taxation. In the case of early Islamic history, the monetary reform of 'Abd al-Malik—its alleged religious or ideological background notwithstanding—must have been undertaken in response to the expanding market conditions. Although the supply of new coins assumed tremendous proportions, and although their production kept on being expanded during the early Caliphate<sup>1)</sup>, no inflationary developments were set off by such a monetary policy<sup>2)</sup>. General stability of prices or<sup>3)</sup>, to be more precise, lack of source references to any drastic rise in the prices of commodities—seems to suggest that the sustained intensive output of coins in the early Caliphate bore witness to the great vitality of the Near Eastern market in that period.

All these developments could not have left the position of the inter-continental commerce unaffected. In a certain sense the political consequences of the great Arab victory had contributed to a major change in this area. With the expulsion of the Byzantines and the destruction of the Sāsānids, the political barrier which had hitherto divided the Near East into two separate blocs ceased to exist. The removal of this artificial barrier, which had been at the root of many destructive wars between the pre-Islamic powers, meant that the natural trade exchange between the western and eastern regions of

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1) W. G. Andrews Jr., et al., 'Early Islamic Mint Output,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 9, 1966, p. 212-241.

2) E. Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient médiévale*, Paris, 1969, p. 40.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 453f.

the Near East could operate without harmful obstructions motivated by political considerations. Indeed, before one proceeds to consider the validity of Pirenne's allegations that the Arabs were guilty of disrupting the unity of the Mediterranean world, one should credit them with the integration of almost entire Near Eastern subcontinent into a common market area with obvious benefits to long-distance trade investors.

"L'économie marchande du Moyen Age musulman, comme celle de l'Antiquité, était surtout une économie de spéculation et d'acquisition", declared Cl. Cahen referring to the flexibility and economic adaptability of commerce in Islamic Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>). In view of the expanding economy of the Caliphate, in view of the emergence of large consumer centers, in view of the rapid growth of local market demand, the long-distance merchants had small need for the markets of Western Europe. Instead of crossing or circumventing the Mediterranean, the Far East trade merchants, like those of the India and Africa trade, or even the distributors of the fruits of local Near Eastern production, could meet their profit requirements by directing their shipments or caravans to Damascus, Fustât, Baghdād or Qayrawān. Obviously, it was this natural economically motivated re-orientation of trans-continental commerce, which precipitated a catastrophic decline in trans-Mediterranean trade, deplored by Pirenne and his supporters.

And today, so far as the Pirennean debate is concerned, the time has come when more attention should be devoted to the nature and consequences of the Near Eastern economic developments in the early Middle Ages. Instead of debating the issue of the Mediterranean trade following the Arab conquest, the Pirennean polemicists should consider the position of commerce to the east of the former *mare nostrum*. Above all, they should admit the possibility that the roots of some of the issues in the Pirennean controversy may be found in the progressive and constructive economic policy of the Arab conquerors.

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1) Cl. Cahen, 'Quelques mots sur le déclin commercial du monde musulman à la fin du moyen âge,' *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, London, 1970, p. 35.



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## INITIAL BYZANTINE REACTIONS TO THE ARAB CONQUEST

Walter E. Kaegi

Numerous competent studies have appeared on Christian apologetics—both Byzantine and Western Medieval—against Islam. A significant gap, however, remains. The Byzantines, of course, first encountered Islam because of the Arab conquest in the second and third quarters of the seventh century. Yet the earliest known Byzantine apologist against Islam is Saint John Damascene in the eighth century. But what initial impression did the Arab conquest and Islam make upon seventh-century Byzantine contemporaries? The seventh-century Byzantine sources on Byzantine reactions to the Arab conquest are scarce, inconveniently located, and insufficiently studied. There is no known individual Byzantine tract of the seventh century devoted specifically to the problem of Islam and/or the Arab conquest. But even though seventh-century sources are relatively rare—on any subject—by a close reading of those which are available one can glean some interesting and, in my opinion, important indications concerning Byzantine reactions to the Arab conquest. Obviously such a major historical event as the loss of Egypt, Palestine and Syria would greatly have impressed the Byzantines and would have caused them to ponder its significance.<sup>1</sup>

Our first two sources, the Christmas sermon of Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem (Patriarch 634-638), and the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, date from 634, only two years after the death of Muhammad. They are, therefore, quite early documents. Both of these sources have been published for some time in critical editions, but they have never been closely analyzed for their interesting historical contents. Sophronius delivered his sermon at Christmas, 634, in the face of dire circumstances. The Arabs had successfully overrun much of Palestine and had occupied Bethlehem, preventing Christian pilgrims from visiting the scene of the Nativity for the first time in memory. The sermon, therefore, is a contemporary record of the deep impression which the very beginnings of the Arab conquest made upon a foremost Byzantine bishop and theologian. Sophronius found many Old Testament parallels to the current situation. He believed, moreover, that this extraordinary Arab invasion was a divinely sent punishment for Christian sins:

Because of countless sins and very serious faults, we have become un-  
1. On western medieval views of Islam: N.A. Daniel, *Islam and the West: Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1958); R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962). Byzantium and Islam: C. Güterbock, *Der Islam im Lichte der byzantinischen Polemik* (Berlin, 1912); D. Eichner, "Die Nachrichten über den Islam bei den Byzantinern," *Der Islam*, XXIII (1936) 133-244; J. Meyendorff, "Byzantine Views of Islam," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 18 (1964), 115-132; Manuel II Palaeologus, *Entretiens avec un Musulman. 7<sup>e</sup> controverse*, ed., tr. Th. Khoury (Sources Chrétiennes, No. 115, Paris, 1966). On the Arab conquest: A. J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt* (Oxford, 1902); P. K. Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State* (reprinted, Beirut, 1966); and M. J. DeGoeje, *Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie* (Mémoires d'histoire et de géographie orientales, II, Leiden, 1900).



worthy of the sight of these things [the sights of Bethlehem] and are prevented from entering Bethlehem by way of the roads. Unwillingly, indeed contrary to our wishes, we are required to stay at home, not bound closely by bodily bonds, but bound by fear of the Saracens, and we are prevented from experiencing such heavenly joy, and are engulfed by a grief suited to our wretchedness which is unworthy of blessings.<sup>2</sup>

Sophronius then compared the situation of the sinful Christians to that of Adam after the Fall, whom the flaming sword barred from paradise: "We do not see the twisting, flaming sword, but rather the sword of the Saracens, beastly and barbarous, which truly is filled with every diabolic savagery. This sword, which flashes forth fearfully and which shines forth inclined to murder, banishes us from that blessed sight [Bethlehem] and orders us to stay at home and does not set us free to go forth."<sup>3</sup>

Sophronius continued, pointing out that the situation of the Jerusalem Christians was also analogous to that of David: "But just as we, so David was prevented from running to holy Bethlehem and drinking at that time because of the slime of the gentiles (like the Saracens now). This slime hindered David from reaching God-receiving Bethlehem just as it now prevents us. Through fear it prevented him from satisfying that very longing and blessed appetite, beyond which there is nothing more blessed or more dear and more delightful."<sup>4</sup>

Sophronius apparently was not cognizant of the Islamic religious springs of this outpouring of Arab marauders. Thus he did not mention Muhammad. In his view, the Arabs were simply terrible, godless invaders without any religious impulse (indeed many of the invading tribesmen only recently had converted from paganism to Islam and probably had only a slight or no understanding of Muhammad's religious message):

But we have the Davidic desire and thirst, to see, just as David famous in song, the water and we are prevented from feasting our souls through fear of the Saracens alone. For now the slime of the godless Saracens [*Sarakēnōn gar atheōn*], like the gentiles at that time, has captured Bethlehem and does not yield the passage, but threatens slaughter and destruction if we leave this holy city and if we dare to approach our beloved and sacred Bethlehem.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Sophronius regarded this calamity as the proper occasion for a rededication to Christian principles and he boldly predicted a Christian triumph over this new enemy who had appeared so suddenly (an interesting anticipation of the mentality of the Crusades):

2. Sophronius, "Weihnachtspredigt des Sophronos," ed. H. Usener, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, N.F. 41 (1886), 506-507. On Sophronius: S. Impellizzeri, *La letteratura bizantina da Costantino agli Iconoclasti* (Bari, 1965), pp. 208-209, 357; B. Altaner, *Patrologie* (7th ed.; Freiburg, 1966), pp. 520-521; G. Bardenhewer *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur* (Freiburg, 1932) V, 36-41; H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und Theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), pp. 434-436; cf. also, H. Usener, *Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, I: *Das Weihnachtspredigt* (2nd ed.; Bonn, 1911), 335-336.

3. Sophronius, "Weihnachtspredigt" 507. Cf. Gen. iii. 24.

4. Sophronius, "Weihnachtspredigt" 513.

5. Sophronius, "Weihnachtspredigt" 514.

Therefore I call on and I command and I beg you for the love of Christ the Lord, in so far as it is in our power, let us correct ourselves, let us shine forth with repentance, let us be purified by conversion and let us curb our performance of acts which are hateful to God. If we constrain ourselves, as friendly and beloved of God, we would laugh at the fall of our Saracen adversaries and we would view their not distant death, and we would see their final destruction. For their blood-loving blade will enter their hearts, their bows will be shattered and their shafts will be fixed in them. They will furnish a clear way for us having neither hills nor thorns nor impassible points so that we, running boldly and dauntlessly, may possess the child of life, may love the God-receiving chamber, may prostrate ourselves before the holy manger. We shall embrace the God-producing city [Bethlehem] dancing with lambs, shouting with the magi, giving glory with the angels: "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth, peace and good will to men."<sup>6</sup>

Thus this passage contains fascinating contrasts of bloodshed, victory and peace.

The *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* is a dialogue which apparently took place on 13 July 634 between Jacob, a recent compulsory convert to Christianity, and several Jews. The tract airs contemporary doubts about the condition of the "Roman (i.e., Byzantine) Empire," and is, therefore, an interesting and neglected source on Byzantine eschatology and an important link in the history of the concept of imperial decadence. Jacob contrasts the former grandeur of the empire with its tarnished contemporary condition: "For the Romans subjugated, through the will of God, all of the races. But today we see the Romans humbled."<sup>7</sup> Several times he refers to the Roman or Byzantine Empire as the famous fourth beast of which the prophet Daniel had spoken. He comments on the condition of the empire and on the relation of the empire's situation to Daniel's prophecy: "If the fourth beast, that is, the Roman Empire, is reduced, torn asunder and shattered, as Daniel said, verily there will be no other, except the ten claws and the ten horns of the fourth beast, and afterwards a little horn, completely different, which has knowledge of God. Immediately there will take place the end of the universe and the resurrection of the dead."<sup>8</sup>

Justus, one of the participants in the dialogue of the *Doctrina*, reports that his brother Abraham of Caesarea "wrote to me saying that a deceiving prophet appeared amidst the Saracens." Justus asserted that Abraham referred the matter to an old scribe: "What do you tell me, lord and teacher, concerning the prophet who has appeared among the Saracens? And the scribe told me, with much groaning, 'He is deceiving. For do prophets come with swords and chariot? Verily, these events of today are works of confusion. . . . Yet depart,

6. Sophronius, "Weihnachtspredigt" 514-515. Cf. Luke ii. 14.

7. *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, ed. N. Bonwetsch (Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, N.F. Bd. XII, Nr. 3 [1910]), 62.

8. *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, 63. Cf. Dan. vii. 17-27. On the fourth beast: H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel* (reprinted, Cardiff, 1964); J. W. Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies. Opposition History under the Roman Empire," *Classical Philology*, xxxv (1940), 1-21.

Lord Abraham, and learn about the prophet who has appeared.' And taking more than enough pains about it, I, Abraham, . . . heard from the followers of the prophet that you will discover nothing true from the said prophet except human bloodshed. . . . These things my brother Abraham wrote to me, Justus, from the east."<sup>9</sup> The identification of the Roman Empire with the fourth beast of Daniel's prophecy is not unusual, but it is interesting to see Byzantine contemporaries, whether Jewish or Christian, attempting so soon to fit the new phenomenon of Islam into the familiar scheme of Daniel's apocalyptic prophecy. To my knowledge, the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* is the earliest Byzantine literary text which refers to Muhammad and his religious message (although it is true that it does not mention him by name). It is also the earliest Byzantine tract to place a judgment upon Islam.

Sometime between 634 and 640 Maximus the Confessor, the firm monastic opponent of Monotheletism, expressed feelings of shock and revulsion at the progress of the Arab conquest. In his letter to Peter the Illustrious he makes no specific mention of Islam, but he asks: "What could be more serious than the evils now enveloping the inhabited world? What could be more terrible to those perceiving it than what is happening? What could be more piteous or fearful to those who are now suffering than to see a barbarous people of the desert overrun a foreign land as though it were their own, and to see wild and untamed beasts, whose form alone is human, devour civilized government?"<sup>10</sup>

Late in the seventh century, St. Anastasius the Sinaite wrote a sermon in which he related the Arab military successes to the excesses of Emperor Constans II against the orthodox, that is, catholic, church. Anastasius in particular deplored the mistreatment of the Roman pope, Martin I:

Martin was exiled by the grandson of Heraclius [Constans II] and swiftly arose Amalik [the Islamicized Arab tribes] of the desert, who struck us, the people of Christ. That was the first terrible and incurable fall of the Roman [Byzantine] army. I am speaking of the bloodshed at Yarmuk and Dathemon, after which occurred the capture and burning of the cities of Palestine, even Caesarea and Jerusalem. After the destruction of Egypt there followed the enslavement and incurable devastation of the Mediterranean lands and islands. But those ruling and dominating the Roman Empire did not understand these things. They summoned the foremost men in the Roman Church, cut out their tongues and cut off their hands. And what then? The requital from God was the virtually complete destruction of the Roman army at Phoenix and the destruction of the fleet and the destruction during his reign of the whole Christian people and all places. This did not cease until the persecutor [Constans II] of Martin perished by the sword [A.D. 668] in Sicily."<sup>11</sup>

9. *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*, 86-87.

10. Maximus Confessor, *epist.* 14, *ad Petrum illustrem*, PG 91, 540. Date: P. Sherwood, *An Annotated Date-list of the Works of Maximus the Confessor* (Studia Anselmiana, fasc. 30, Rome, 1952), 40. In general: O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1932) V, 28-36; B. Altaner, *Patrologie*<sup>1</sup>, pp. 521-524; Beck, *Theologie und Kirche*, pp. 436-442.

11. Anastasius Sinaite, *Sermo* 3, PG 89, 1156. Cf. Beck, *Theologie und Kirche*, pp. 442-443; F. De Sa, "Anastasius Sinaite, St." *New Catholic Encyclopedia* I (1967), 481.

Anastasius then pointed to the external peace which Byzantium enjoyed while the Arabs destroyed themselves in civil war. This, he emphasized, took place only after Emperor Constantine IV restored peace and unity within the church. Thus Anastasius, like Sophronius, perceived the Arab conquest as a divine retribution for Christian sins, in this case, the sins of Emperor Constans II (641-668). But already some inaccuracies in the history of Arab conquest were appearing, for the battle of Yarmuk (636) took place under Emperor Heraclius, not under his grandson Constans II; the reference to "Amalik" seems garbled.<sup>12</sup> Therefore the reaction of the seventh-century Byzantine Christians bears similarity to Byzantine reactions to the decline of the Western Roman Empire (for fifth-century Byzantine observers also sought to find religious explanations for the barbarian victories and for the collapse of imperial defenses).<sup>13</sup>

The seventh-century apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius regarded the Arab Conquest as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of Daniel and Jeremiah. The author of this apocalypse asserted that destruction would befall the Romans or Byzantines in a manner analogous to their annihilation of other peoples: "... the rulers of the Greeks, that is, the Romans, will fall on the point of the sword. Just as the Romans killed the rulers of the Hebrews and Greeks, so they themselves will fall on the point of the sword of the seed of Ishmael, who was called the wild ass, because in anger and wrath they will be dispatched on the face of the earth against men, cattle, all wild beasts, plants and every kind of fruit."<sup>14</sup>

The Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse attributed the success of the Arabs to the sins of the Romans or Byzantines, in particular to their sexual license:

Thus not because He loved them did the Lord God give to the power to seize the land of the Christians, but because of the lawlessness of the Christians. The likes of it never had occurred nor may it occur in the entire generations of earth. For why did men put on the clothes of adulterous women and prostitutes, adorn themselves as women and openly stand in the squares and markets of towns and change their natural practice for an unnatural one . . . ? Likewise, women did the same things as the men had done. Father, son and brother had intercourse with one woman who touched every kinsman, for they were not recognized by the prostitutes. . . . For this reason God delivered them into the hands of the barbarians, that is, because of their sin and stench. The women will pollute themselves through the men who already are polluted and the sons of Ishmael will cast lots [for them].<sup>15</sup>

12. Anastasius Sinaita, PG 89, 1156-1157. Yarmuk: Baladhuri/P. K. Hitti, *Origins of the Islamic State*, pp. 207-212; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6126, ed. C. De Boor (Leipzig, 1883, I, 338-339); J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (1st ed.; London, 1889) II, 263-265; De Goeje, *Mémoire sur la conquête de Syrie*, pp. 31-34, 103-136.

13. Cf. W. E. Kaegi, Jr., *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, 1968), chapters 4-6.

14. *Otkrovenie Mefodiia Patarskago i Apokrificheskiiia Videnia Daniela v Vizantiiskii i Slaviano-Russkoi Literaturakh*, ed. V. M. Istrium, *Chtenia v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom Universitete*, No. 193 (Moscow, 1897), Teksty, 26-27. Cf. brief discussion in the valuable article by P. J. Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources," *American Historical Review* LXXXIII (1968), 1000-1002.

15. *Otkrovenie Mefodiia Patarskago* 27-28.

The author was careful to emphasize that God had no love for the Muslim Arabs, that their victories did not signify divine approval of them or Islam, but instead resulted from strong divine disapproval—supported by appropriate scriptural quotations—of recent Christian conduct. The author apparently wished to point out that Arab military successes did not justify any Christian conversions to Islam.

The Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse proceeded to catalogue and explore, in the most lurid detail, the various horrors which accompanied the Arab conquest. The author allowed his imagination to run wild concerning the bloodthirsty and rapacious acts of the conquerors. He wished to make the conquest appear as horrible as possible to effect the maximum shock and contrition on the part of his audience:

The land of Persia will be delivered over to ruin and destruction and her inhabitants to captivity and the sword. Cappadocia and her inhabitants will be swallowed down in similar ruin, captivity and slaughter. Sicily will become desolate and her inhabitants will meet slaughter and captivity. Hellas and inhabitants will meet destruction, captivity and the sword. Romania [Asia Minor] will undergo destruction and her people will be turned to flight. The islands of the sea will become desolate and their inhabitants will perish through the sword and captivity. Egypt, the East and Syria will be loaded with an immeasurable yoke of affliction. They mercilessly will be pressed into service and their souls will be lured by an irresistible amount of gold. The inhabitants of Egypt and Syria will experience distress and affliction seven times worse than captivity. The land of the Gospel will be smitten from the four winds beneath the heavens and will be as dust in a mass which is gathered by the wind. There will be plague and famine upon them. The hearts of the destroyers will be uplifted and raised in contempt and they will babble excessively until their appointed time. They will gain mastery over the entrance and exit from the north and east to the west and the sea. All men will be beneath their yoke and birds and all waters of the sea will be subject to them, and the deserts, where their inhabitants hunt, will be theirs. They will register claim for themselves of the mountains as well as the deserts, fish of the sea, wood of the hills, soil of the land, rocks and the land's productivity will be their revenues. They will possess the labors and sweat of the farmers, the property of the rich, the offerings to the saints, whether gold, silver, precious stones, copper or iron, the holy and glorious vestments, every food and all honorable things. Their hearts will be exceedingly exalted until they demand the corpses themselves equally of widows, orphans and saints. They will have no mercy on laborers, the poor, they will dishonor the aged and will afflict and have no mercy on the weak and infirm, but will mock and laugh at those who are distinguished in wisdom and in political and civic affairs. Everyone will be shamed into silence and will be afraid since they will not have the strength to reply or to say anything plainly. All of the inhabitants of the earth will be astonished and their wisdom and education, of evil origin, will be powerless to retort to or to alter their [the Arabs'] proclamations. Their course will be from sea to sea, from east to west, and from the north to the desert of Yathrib. Their way will be named the way of difficulty and presbyters and presbyteresses, poor and rich, laborers and the thirsty and prisoners, will travel it and will bless the dead. . . . For apostasy is education and it will educate all of the earth's inhabitants. Since God called Ishmael, their father, a wild ass, accordingly, wild asses and scorpions of the desert and every kind of wild and tame beast will be captured, all of the wood of the hill-

side will be extirpated, the beauty of the mountains will vanish, cities will become desolate, lands will become impassible because of the reduction of the human population and the earth will be polluted by blood and they [the Arabs] will gain hold of its fruit. For the tyrannically conquering barbarians are not men, but sons of the desert who will come to desolation, are ruined and will welcome hate. And in the beginning, at the time of their exodus, pregnant women will be won by their [the Arabs'] swords and will become food for the wild beasts. They will slaughter the priests at home, defiling the holy places, and they will lie with their wives in the revered and holy places where the mystical and bloodless sacrifice is performed. Their wives, sons and daughters will put on the holy vestments, they will place these on their horses, they will spread them on their beds and they will tie their cattle in the coffins of the saints. They will be corrupted murderers, like a fire testing the race of the Christians.<sup>16</sup>

The author of the Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse foresaw a subsequent period in which many Christians would convert to Islam. Yet he by no means was wholly pessimistic about the future. He remained a loyal Byzantine Christian and confidently predicted and joyously looked forward to, the ultimate triumph of the Byzantine emperor and the eradication of the Arabs and Islam. Patriarch Sophronius, one must remember, also had predicted such a Christian recovery. It is interesting that the Pseudo-Methodius apocalypse described and dwelled with bitter satisfaction on the sufferings which the Arabs would undergo, perhaps to a greater degree than the apocalypse recounted the more positive benefits which would accompany the restoration of the former limits of the Byzantine Empire:

Then suddenly the Emperor of the Greeks or Romans will rise up against them with great wrath and will be awakened like a man from his sleep who had been drinking wine, whom men had thought to be a corpse and of no use. This man will come out against them from the sea of the Ethiopians and will thrust his sword and desolation as far as Yathrib, that is, into their fatherland, and will make captive their wives and children. The sons of the emperor will descend upon the inhabitants of the land of the Gospel and will eradicate them from the earth. Fear will fall upon them from all directions. Their wives and children, those nursing babes, all of their encampments and the property of their fathers in their lands will be delivered into the hands of the Emperor of the Romans, that is, to the sword, captivity, death and destruction. The yoke of the Emperor of the Romans will be seven times worse upon them than their own yoke had been. Great distress will seize them—dirt, thirst, affliction—they and their wives will be the slaves of their [former] slaves. Their slavery will be a hundred times more bitter and painful. The earth, which they had desolated, will be at peace and each man will return to his own property and to that of his fathers. Armenia, Cilicia, Isauria, Africa, Hellas, Sicily and everyone who was abandoned will return to his property and to that of his fathers. Men will multiply on the desolate earth like the locusts of Egypt. Arabia will be devastated by fire, Egypt will be burned and the coast will be at peace. The entire wrath of the Emperor of the Romans will be upon those who deny our Lord Jesus Christ. The earth will be at peace and there will be a general calm on earth such as never has existed and will not again exist, as it is the end. There will be merriment on earth and men will

16. *Otkrovenie Mefodija Patarskago* 28-33.

dwelt in peace and rebuild cities, will free priests from their pains and men will cease to have afflictions in that time.<sup>17</sup>

Yet the author of the Pseudo-Methodius foretold another calamity after this period of peaceful bliss. The gates of the north would open and wild tribes would pour forth to conquer and devastate the world for seven years. Then the Byzantine emperor would descend to Jerusalem, and at Golgotha he would offer up his crown to Jesus Christ, after which more destruction would ensue until terminated by the coming of Christ on earth. In this manner the author of the apocalypse viewed the Arab conquest as part of a much broader scheme of ultimate Christian eschatology.

Another late seventh-century writer, the Armenian historian Sebeos, attempted to relate the appearance of the Arabs to the prophecies of Daniel. He asked:

But who would be able to tell of the horror of the invasion of the Ishmaelites [= Arabs], which embraced land and sea? The fortunate Daniel foresaw and prophesied evils similar to those which were to take place on earth. By four beasts he symbolized the four kingdoms which must arise on earth. First, the beast with a human form, the kingdom of the west, which is that of the Greeks. That is clear by his saying, 'Its wings fell and it was effaced from the earth.' He is referring to the destruction of diabolic idolatry. 'And it made to stand as on human feet, and a man's heart was given to it.' And here is the second beast, similar to a bear. It was raised up on one side, the eastern side. It signifies the kingdom of the Sassanids. 'And having three sides to its mouth,'—he means the kingdom of the Persians, Medes and the Parthians. This is evident by the fact that one says to him: 'Arise, devour several bodies.' As, moreover, the world knows he devoured them so thoroughly. 'And the third beast, like a leopard, with wings of a bird on him and four heads of a beast.' He means the kingdom of the North, Gog and Magog, and their two companions, to whom was given the power to fly with force in their time from the northern direction. 'And the fourth beast, terrible, dreadful, his teeth of iron, his claws of bronze; he ate and crunched and trampled the rest underfoot.' He is saying that this fourth kingdom, which rises from the south [east], is the kingdom of Ishmael. As the archangel explained it, 'The beast of fourth kingdom will arise, will be more powerful than all of the kingdoms and will eat the whole world. His ten horns are the ten kings who will arise, and after them will arise another who will surpass in evil all of the preceding ones.'<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, Sebeos defined his aims as an historian with reference to the Bible:

I shall continue to tell of the evils which occurred in our time, including the topic of the rending of the ancient faith, and of the burning and mortal simoom wind which blows on us and burns large and beautiful trees and gardens. And we have merited it, for we have sinned against the Lord and we have enraged the holy of Israel. 'If you take pleasure in listening to me,' he says, 'you will enjoy the good things of the earth, but if you do not wish to listen to me, the sword will devour you, for the word of the Lord has so spoken.'

The tempest in question passed over Babylon, but it unleashed itself also on all lands, for Babylon is the mother of all the nations and its kingdom is the kingdom of the regions of the North and also the

17. *Otkrovenie Mefodiia Patarskago* 40-43.

18. Sebeos, *Histoire d'Héraclius*, tr. F. Macler (Paris, 1904), 104-105. Cf. Dan. vii. 3-24.

South, that is to say, over the Hindus and over the nations which inhabit, for their part, the great desert, or the sons of Abraham who were born of Hagar and of Ketur: Ishmael. . . . It came from the great and enormous desert which Moses and the children of Israel had inhabited, following the word of the prophet: 'Like a hurricane, it will come from the south, coming from the desert, a formidable place,' which is to say, coming from the great and terrible desert from which the storm of these nations surged, occupied, conquered and defeated the whole world. And what had been said, 'The fourth beast will be the fourth kingdom on earth, more deadly than all of the kingdoms, which will change the whole earth into a desert,' was accomplished.<sup>19</sup>

Thus Sebeos believed that the most reasonable way in which to understand the phenomenon of the Arab conquest was to regard it as the fulfillment of divine prophecy (just as fifth-century pagans regarded the collapse of the Western Roman Empire as foretold by the ancient oracles, and just as fifth-century Christians regarded the fall of the Roman Empire in the west as the implementation of the divine will and the words of the Scriptures). In fact, Sebeos regarded his own history as a reflection of the truth of ancient prophecy; he considered himself to be a continuator of the prophets:

Now, although speaking vainly, I cause my words to file past according to the order of this history, following the feeble thought of my mind, and not according to the dignity of science. While bearing in mind the instructions of the friends of this study, I shall also confirm the prophetic word which has spoken according to God's order. In the last events, up to the consummation of the centuries, as it happened in the beginning, the word of the Lord will accomplish itself; Him who said, 'The heavens and the earth will pass, but my words will not pass.'<sup>20</sup>

After repeating Daniel's prophecy concerning the fourth beast once more, Sebeos concluded his history.

It is interesting to note that Sebeos' interpretation of the historical phenomenon of Islam represented a change from the perspective of such earlier sources as the *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati*. True, both works view the appearance of Arabs and Islam from an Old Testament frame of reference. But for Sebeos, the fourth beast of Daniel's ancient prophecy is no longer the Roman Empire, but rather, the new Islamic Empire! Thus, in a certain sense, Sebeos, like his other late seventh-century contemporary St. Anastasius, are beginning to accept (although they still abhor and regard it as a divine-sent calamity) the existence, for better or worse, of the Islamic Empire. The Arab conquest is no longer seen as a temporary historical aberration, but they still hoped, and honestly believed, that perhaps by acts of contrition and rededication to fundamental principles, they could improve their own position *vis-à-vis Islam*. Perhaps, then, after true contrition, as Patriarch Sophronius had predicted, they would triumph over Islam. This was a subtle alteration in the Eusebian doctrine that the condition of the church and the condition of the state, i.e., the Byzantine Empire, was intimately related. Thus St. Anastasius thought that Constantine IV's correction of church affairs brought not only

19. Sebeos, *Histoire d'Héraclius* 129-130. Cf. Dan. vii. 23.

20. Sebeos, *Histoire d'Héraclius* 147. Cf. Matth. xxiv. 35.



internal peace to state and church, but also caused internal dissension among the arch-enemies of Christendom, the non-believing Arabs.

Sebeos, of course, was a Monophysite. He believed, however, that the Arab conquest of the Armenian and Byzantine peoples had occurred because of Christian sins. Similarly, another late seventh-century Monophysite, the Coptic Bishop John of Nikiu, in Egypt, emphasized that these events had taken place because of divine anger. Unlike Sebeos, however, John of Nikiu specifically attributed the calamity to the errors of the 'heretical' Chalcedonian Christians. He stressed that God took vengeance on Byzantine/Chalcedonian authorities for the bloody repression by Byzantine soldiers of a Gaianist Monophysite riot against Cyrus, Orthodox/Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria: "But God, the guardian of justice, did not neglect the world, but avenged those who had been wronged: He had no mercy on such as had dealt treacherously against Him, but He delivered them into the hands of the Ishmaelites. And the Moslem thereupon took the field and conquered all of the land of Egypt."<sup>21</sup> John of Nikiu also interprets the Arab capture of the citadel of Babylon (in Egypt) as a divine punishment for Chalcedonian sins: "Thus God punished them because they had not honoured the redemptive passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave his life for those who believe in Him. Yea, it was for this reason that God made them turn their back upon them (i.e. the Moslem)."<sup>22</sup> Again, speaking of the Arab capture of Alexandria, John commented: "And they had none to help them, and God destroyed their hopes, and delivered the Christians into the hands of their enemies."<sup>23</sup> A contemporary observer, John emphasized that the Muslims were "the enemies of God" and he refers to Islam as 'the detestable doctrine of the beast, that is, Mohammed.'<sup>24</sup> Thus as far as he was concerned, Islam was indeed a new religion, and a hateful one, and not at all another heresy. Thus by the end of the seventh century, both Chalcedonian and Monophysitic Christians reluctantly had come to accept the existence of Islam although they still loathed it. They had not yet sought to understand it (only men with the perspective of St. John of Damascus could do that, in the eighth century).

It is significant, in my opinion, that these first two seventh-century attempts to write histories of the Arab conquest were both Monophysite efforts. Not that Sebeos and John of Nikiu primarily wrote their respective histories as propaganda, however. But the earliest extant Orthodox, that is, Chalcedonian, histories which describe

21. *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu*, ch. 116. 13-14, tr. R. H. Charles (Oxford, 1916), p. 186; cf. A. H. M. Jones, "Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?", *Journal of Theological Studies*, N. S. 10 (1959), 289.

22. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 117. 4 (187 Charles); on the siege of Babylon (= Cairo): Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 249-274.

23. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 121. 7 (201 Charles); on the siege and surrender of Alexandria:

24. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle* 121. 10 (201 Charles).  
Butler, *Arab Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 310-327.

the Arab conquest date from the early ninth century. These are, specifically, the chronicles of Theophanes Confessor and the Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople.<sup>25</sup> They may depend on lost prototypes. There are doubtless many possible explanations for the absence of earlier Orthodox Byzantine histories on seventh-century events, including the disruptive nature of events in the seventh and eighth centuries (yet this did not prevent two Monophysites, Sebeos and John of Nikiu, from writing histories).

One may venture a hypothesis which may serve as at least a partial explanation. It would have been easier for the heretical Christians to make a facile explanation of seventh-century catastrophes as irrefutable examples of divine retribution for the Chalcedonian errors of the Byzantine government. These events, then, were a "pragmatic" confirmation of the non-Calcedonian theological position. Thus Nestorians and Monophysites had also developed theological interpretations of the breakdown of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century.<sup>26</sup> But unlike the fifth and sixth centuries, when the Orthodox Christians (i.e., Chalcedonians) had been able to interpret satisfactorily within a Eusebian framework both the breakdown of the Roman Empire in the west and its successful survival in the east as the Byzantine Empire, it was extremely difficult for Orthodox Christians to find a suitable theological and historical framework in which to explain the fortunes of the Byzantine Empire and the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church in the seventh century. Perhaps that is why both Theophanes and Nicephorus employed the chronicle form rather than the model of Eusebius. The last previous use of the Eusebian framework had been the *Ecclesiastical History* of Evagrius in the late sixth century. Evagrius had expressed great confidence in the union of empire and church,<sup>27</sup> but within a few years, the murder of the Emperor Maurice (602), the Sassanid, Avar, Slavic invasions, and finally the Arab conquest would surely have caused deep soul-searching. Perhaps this soul-searching took until the ninth century. Only then did the Chalcedonian Orthodox venture an historical account of the seventh century disasters. These first accounts, moreover, offered little explanation of the events; they mainly sought to place them in chronological framework. These are simply my speculations, of course, but it is hoped that this paper will inspire further studies by other scholars on the (1) impact of Islam upon Byzantium in the seventh century (2) greater interest in seventh-century patrology.

25. Critical editions: Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (2 vols. Leipzig 1883; reprinted Hildesheim 1963); *Nicephori Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani Opuscula Historica* (Leipzig, 1880), Cf. G. Moravesik, *Byzantinoturcica* (2nd ed.; Berlin 1958), I, 531-587, 456-459, and the thorough study of Nicephorus by P. J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople* (Oxford, 1958), esp. pp. 157-162.

26. W. E. Kaegi, Jr. *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 218-223, 254.

27. *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius*, ed. J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London, 1898). See esp. 3. 41 (141-144 Bidez-Parmentier). Cf. B. Altaner, *Patrologie*<sup>7</sup>, 229; Moravesik, *Byzantinoturcica*, I, 257-259.



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## ONLY A CHANGE OF MASTERS? THE CHRISTIANS OF IRAN AND THE MUSLIM CONQUEST

*Stephen Gerö*

In his still standard history of Persian Christianity during Sasanian times Joseph Labourt closes his summary account of the Muslim conquest of the Sasanian empire — a conquest in the course of which, says he, the Christians either showed a neutrality favorable to the invaders or at least did practically nothing to help the Persians — with a simple explanation for this passivity. It only continued a pattern of behavior: the Aramaeans of Mesopotamia had been dominated and exploited by the stronger for over a millenium. «Il importe peu à l'esclave à servir tel ou tel maître»<sup>1</sup>. Taking this sweeping (and widely accepted<sup>2</sup>) judgment as the point of departure, some early evidence for the Christians attitude to this great divide in Iranian history will be here briefly presented and examined.

The fate and fortune of the so-called Nestorian church, the «Church of the East» according to its own official designation, was tied up for better or worse with the Sasanian state since at least the early fifth century. This is not the place to rehearse the ups and downs of this symbiosis<sup>3</sup>. It should be noted that the Christian community did flourish, despite internal divisions as well as repeated (and severe) persecution and repression; Christians may well have come to form the single largest religious community in Mesopotamia at the time of the Muslim conquest. The relatively abundant still surviving Christian literature in Syriac from this period is of course almost exclusively preoccupied with matters of abstruse theology, mysticism or at best internal church affairs; but some good early sources give us a few authentic glimpses into what one could call the religiopolitical attitude

<sup>1</sup> *Le christianisme dans l'empire perse sous la dynastie Sassanide* (224-632), (Paris, 1904), p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, vol. 5 (Leiden, 1970), p. 121; A.R. Vine, *The Nestorian Churches* (London, 1937), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> See now S.P. Brock's suggestive and well-documented study, «Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties», *Studies in Church History* 18 (1982), pp. 1-19.

of the Christian clergy during the crucial transition period of the Muslim conquest.

The chronologically earliest source of import in the collection of the letters of Išo'yahb III, catholicos (patriarch) of the Nestorians from 649 to 659; the Arabs are mentioned in two of his letters. In one letter written sometimes prior to his elevation to the patriarchate, perhaps when he was still bishop of Niniveh, Išo'yahb claims that the Muslim Arabs do not help those who say that God suffered and died<sup>4</sup> — i.e. that the monophysite ecclesiastical opponents of the writer found no favor with the conquerors. No elaboration of the background is given; this is at most an oblique acknowledgment of the monotheism of the Muslims, and clear evidence for the fact that the several Christian confessions very early started competing for Muslim patronage. The second mention of the Arabs comes from a later letter, written by the catholicos during the reign of the caliph 'Uthmān. Išo'yahb castigates the Christians of Oman (ethnic Arabs?) for giving up their faith and apostasizing to Islam for pecuniary reasons — the Arabs only demanded half (!) their possessions as tribute as an alternative to conversion. To show how unnecessary this later step was, Išo'yahb, as part of his argument, paints a very positive picture of the divinely ordained

Arab rule, and describes the benevolent attitude of the Arabs toward Christian ecclesiastics and church property<sup>5</sup>. Seemingly significant is the fact that — by choice or because of lack of information? — the catholicos does not say anything specific about the apostasy of the Omanis; he refuses to acknowledge or to meet head on the religious challenge of Islam. The immediate deep satisfaction with the (unexpectedly?) light yoke of Arab rule is in any case evident — one should note that Išo'yahb himself wrote an account of the martyrdom of a Christian convert from Zoroastrianism, one of the last confessors under Sasanian rule<sup>6</sup>. Toward the end of his life Išo'yahb however may have come to think very differently about the blessings of Arab rule; according to one (late) source he was thrown into prison and tortured for refusing to give a large sum — as bribe or ransom? — to the Arab emir of al-Madā'in, an appointee of the caliph 'Alī; the emir also proceeded to lay waste the churches of Kūfa and Hīra<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. R. Duval, *Išo'yahb III patriarcha, Liber epistularum, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptorum Syri, series secunda, tomus LXIV* (Leipzig, 1904), p. 97, lines 4 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Duval, p. 251, lines 13 ff. On this text see further J.F. Fiey, «Išo'yahb le Grand ...», *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 36 (1970), pp. 33 ff and H. Suermann, «Orientalische Christen und der Islam. Christliche Texte aus der Zeit von 632-750», *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 67 (1983), 128 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Ed. J.B. Chabot, «Histoire de Jésus-Sabran, écrit par Jésus-Sabran, écrite par Jésus-Yab d'Adiabène», *Nouvelles archives des missions scientifiques et littéraires*, vol. 7, pp. 485-584.

<sup>7</sup> *Gregorii Barhebraei chronicon ecclesiasticum*, ed. J.B. Abbeloos-T.J. Lamy, Tomus III (Paris-Louvain, 1877), col. 131. See further Fiey, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

The second pertinent early source, the so-called anonymous chronicle of Guidi<sup>8</sup>, datable to at latest ca. 680<sup>9</sup>, again gives no systematic account of the Arab conquest, but describes aspects of it along with other secular and religious matters. The chronicle, or rather the extant extract, gives a detailed and valuable account of Persian history during the reign of Khosrau II and his successors. It asserts that the Arab triumph was a result of divine dispensation<sup>10</sup> — but this triumph is not causally linked to the misdeeds of the Persians, in contrast to Khosrau's earlier conquest of the Byzantine dominions, which is explicitly described as divine punishment for the murder of the emperor Maurice and his children<sup>11</sup>. The last futile resistance of the troops of Yazdkart III to the seemingly numberless children of Ismael (led by Mohammed!), whose divinely ordained advance simply could not be halted, is described in measured terms<sup>12</sup>. The death of Yazdkart is noted, somewhat indifferently, without either exulting over the demise of the last of the persecutors, so to speak, or in any way indicating a Christian pity or sympathy for the hunted refugee. (The romantic story of Christian clerics or monks giving honorable burial to the last of the Sasanian kings is only found in Muslim sources<sup>13</sup>). More realistically — or honestly — than Išo'yahb the chronicle notes — without apportioning blame or bestowing crowns of martyrdom — that Christians of course could not remain unaffected by the hostilities. It relates that upon the capture of Šušter after a long siege the Arabs massacred civilians indiscriminately and killed priests, deacons, students, teachers and even the bishop of the city in the sanctuary itself<sup>14</sup>. Significant is what this source says — or does not say — about the two leaders of the Nestorian church who preceded Išo'yahb III as patriarchs — namely Išo'yahb II (628-645) and Mar Emmeh (646-49), who were the heads of the Persian Christian com-

<sup>8</sup> Ed. I. Guidi, *Chronica minora I, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores syri series tertia Tomus IV* (Paris, 1903), pp. 15 ff. See further Th. Nöldeke's translation and commentary («Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik», *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserl. Akad. der Wiss., phil.-hist. Classe*, vol. 128, (Vienna, 1892), Abhandlung No. IX (separate pagination). The recent attempt to identify the author as Elias of Merw, a close collaborator of Išo'yahb II (P. Nautin, «L'auteur de la «Chronique Anonyme de Guidi» Élie de Merw», *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 199 (1982), 303 ff) is not particularly convincing.

<sup>9</sup> Nöldeke, *op. cit.* p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ed. Guidi, p. 38, line 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. Guidi, p. 25, lines 10 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Ed. Guidi, p. 31, lines 1 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Ta'alibī (ed. H. Zotenberg, *Histoire des rois de Perse ...* (Paris, 1900), p. 748, lines 1-2); Firdaisi (ed. J. Mohl, *Le Livre des rois par Abou'lkasim Firdousi*, vol. 7 (Paris, 1876), p. 484, lines 498 ff). Rather curiously, J.M. Fiey uncritically accepts this late anecdote as historical (*Jalons pour une histoire de l'Église en Iraq*, CSCO, vol. 310 (Louvain, 1970), p. 64).

<sup>14</sup> Ed. Guidi, p. 37, lines 1 ff.

munity during the Arab conquest itself. Išo'yahb II simply left the hunger-plagued and plundered capital Ctesiphon soon after the Arabs occupied it<sup>15</sup>. There is no word about his negotiating for protection of Christian sanctuaries and clerics, in telling contrast to anachronistic reports of medieval Christian Arabic sources, which claim that the patriarch tried to pay homage to the prophet Mohammed in Arabia and that he received diplomas of privilege from Abu Bekr as well as from 'Umar<sup>16</sup>! As far as Mar Emmeh is concerned, that chronicle laconically states that after his inthronization as catholicos he was much respected by the Ismaelite authorities<sup>17</sup> — nothing more. It is of course possible that this high repute is explicable by the pro-Arab attitude of Mar Emmeh — according to later sources he provided supplies for the invaders in his capacity as bishop of Niniveh, and (obviously anachronistically) was rewarded by a diploma of protection from the caliph 'Alī<sup>18</sup>. That the seventh-century chronicle however does not intimate any active collaboration of this sort should give us a pause<sup>19</sup>.

The third early source of interest is the world chronicle of Yoḥannān bar Penkāyē, written perhaps around 690<sup>20</sup>. The divine sanction of the Arab conquest is again a basic theme — but interestingly, for once an explicit connection *is* made with the punishment of the Persians. God sent forth the barbarian Arabs to destroy the sinful kingdom and to humble the arrogant pride of the Persian rulers. Arab conquest of the Byzantine dominions is also registered; but, in contrast to West Syrian, Monophysite writers who link the Byzantine defeat to the persecution of their party, Yoḥannān makes no such theological nexus. Rather he introduces the notion that the invasion of Persia was provoked by divine anger at the schisms and transgressions of the Christians in Persia themselves. In a manner similar to

<sup>15</sup> Ed. Guidi, p. 31, lines 7ff.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Chronicle of Se'ert, ed. A. Scher, *Patrologia Orientalis* 13 (1918), p. 619. On the life and works of Išo'yahb II see now L.R.M. Sako, *Lettre christologique du patriarche syro-oriental Išo'yahb II de Gdālā (628-646)*, (Rome, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Ed. Guidi, p. 32, lines 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Chronicle of Se'ert, ed. Scher, *Patr. Orient.* vol. 13, p. 630; Mārī ibn Sulaymān, ed. H. Gismondi, *Maris ... de patriarchis nestorianorum commentaria*, Rome 1899, p. 62, lines 9ff.

<sup>19</sup> Even more suspicious is the statement, again only in one late source (Bar Hebraeus, *Chron. eccl.*, ed. Abbeloos-Lamy, Tomus III, cols. 123-25) that the newly appointed leader of the Persian monophysite community, the «maphrian» Marutha, opened the gates of Tagrit to the invaders; this cannot be in any case reconciled with the several Muslim accounts of the taking of Tagrit by siege.

<sup>20</sup> Partial edition by A. Mingana in his *Sources syriaques*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1907). See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn, 1922), p. 210. All of the following material is taken from Chapters 14 and 15 of the work, ed. Mingana, pp. 142\*ff.

İsō'yahb's, he emphasizes the genuine benevolence of the Arabs toward Christians, in particular to monks. Since they followed the divine command (mediated to them through Mohammed!) to respect Christianity, the poorly equipped Arabs were able to gain control of two great empires practically without encountering resistance. But then, complicating matters, Yohannān asserts that the Arabs in turn were punished for their depredations by the outbreak of a civil war between «Easterners» and «Westerners». He proceeds to describe the tolerant and peaceful reign of Mu'awiya; interesting here is his disapproval of the intellectual anarchy, of how all heresies were allowed to thrive during this caliph's all too tolerant rule. Then he seems to predict an apocalyptic destruction of the Muslim empire (and of what remained of the Byzantine) through the plague and the rise of the new group of the Šurtē, the armed slaves of the Ši'ite pretender Muḥtar ... These are just some of the high points, so to speak, of this intriguing, but difficult and still inadequately investigated text<sup>21</sup>.

The following picture begins to emerge, on the basis of these and some other sources. The East Syrian Christian community as such did accept the imposition of Arab rule relatively passively, though there were numerous Christians in both the Arab and the Persian armies. There is evidence for the early levying of Arab taxation, which soon was felt to be burdensome, but there is no reason to regard this tax as the sign of imposition of full communal *dhimmī*-status. To a great extent the church was left to its own devices in dealing with dissidents within and without its ranks. The «disestablishment» of the Mazdaean religion certainly gave new impulse to the ongoing conversion of Zoroastrians, and (though this point should not be overemphasized) the church did provide a sphere of action and new career opportunities for Persian nobility. The general atmosphere of tolerance is unmistakable, in contrast to the rigid interpretation of the *dhimma* in the Abbasid period. The boundaries may have been more flexible between the several religious groups in the seventh century than one would think; there was more than just the familiar one-way traffic of Christians converting in droves to Islam<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> See R. Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, vol. XXV, 2 (Leipzig, 1940), pp. 5-8 and W.G. Young, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph* (Rawalpindi, 1974), pp. 99 ff.

<sup>22</sup> The well-known Nestorian mystic Joseph Hazzāyā came from a high-ranking Zoroastrian family; he became first a Muslim, while still a child, as slave of an Arab master, and then a Christian after he was sold again, to one Cyriacus of Qardu, who in the end gave Joseph his freedom in order to allow him to become a monk. (İsō'dnaḥ of Basra, «Book of chastity», ed. J.B. Chabot, in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 16 (1896), p. 64, tr. p. 278. See Baumstark, *op. cit.*, p. 222).



In conclusion, just some general reflections on the reasons for the relative indifference to the passing away of Sasanian rule will be presented. The contract, the concordat if one will, between the episcopate of the church of the East and the Persian imperial authority, impressively illustrated in the synodal acts of the fifth and sixth centuries, was not followed by the appearance of a Persian Constantine, who would have converted the Sasanian empire to Christianity. Khosrau II, despite his several Christian wives and favorites and his personal dabbling in at least peripheral aspects of Christian religiosity, did not continue the former policy of state support of the Nestorian church, but favored the monophysites and in the end may even have begun to turn against Christians in general. The toleration practiced by Khosrau's weak successors, in part motivated by political difficulties, did not restore the concordat. At the time of the Arab conquest the Christian leaders no longer felt, it seems, that the church was bound to the Sasanian imperial system. Impressed by the ease and rapidity of the Arab conquest, which they naturally interpreted, in theological terms, as signs of divine approbation, they made their submission to the new order, which initially at least was characterized by a large degree of *laissez-faire*. There was a — to us curiously myopic — lack of comprehension of Islam as a new aggressive spiritual movement. Despite the noteworthy beginning of large-scale missionary enterprise around this time, the Nestorian church did not take advantage of the spell of relative freedom in the seventh and early eighth centuries to consolidate its previous gains. Rather one can see the appearance of a certain communal exhaustion after intense internal jurisdictional and confessional struggles in late Sasanian times. The way was being prepared for the imposition and supine acceptance of inferior, marginal *dhimmī*-status in the Abbasid period. If, after the initial euphoria, the Christians did come to realize that it made a great deal of difference, in the long run, which master they served, by then they had really no choice at all in the matter.

## AN APOCALYPTIC VISION OF ISLAMIC HISTORY

*Bernard Lewis*

**D**URING the first four centuries of Islamic rule Messianic hopes ran high among the peoples of the Caliphate. Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians, subjected to the rule of a new and alien religion, cherished and embellished their traditions of a Messiah or *Saoshiyant* of a God-chosen line who, in God's time, would come or return to the world, end the sufferings of the faithful and the dominion of their opponents, and establish the kingdom of God upon earth. Before very long Islam itself was affected. First in the heresies of the newly-converted, dissatisfied with the status assigned to them in what was still an Arab kingdom, grafting their old beliefs on their new faith; then in the orthodoxy of all Islam, the belief arose in a *Mahdī*, a "divinely guided one" who, in the words of the tradition, would "fill the earth with justice and equity as it is now filled with tyranny and oppression".

With the passing of empires and the flowering and disappointment of successive hopes, the tradition of the Coming grew and developed. One oppressor after another added something of himself to the portraits of the Antichrist, while the many false Messiahs, in their failure, bequeathed new details and new tokens to the Messiah yet to come. Each group had its own traditions; yet they were in no way separate and water-tight, and many ideas and beliefs passed, through converts and other channels, from one religion to another.

By no means the least impatient in their expectation of Redemption were the Jews. When the crumbling of empires under the blows of internal revolutions and external invasions seemed to portend the long awaited end, anxious Jewish eyes scanned the Time of Troubles in which they lived for signs of the coming of Messiah, and sought to identify, in the events taking place about them, the vague prophecies and traditions handed down to them of the last wars of the Messiah. It was in such times that the apocalyptic books were written. Their authors had several purposes—to console the oppressed with hopes of imminent triumph, to justify the ways of God to men by showing that their sufferings were not arbitrary but part of a divinely ordained scheme of things culminating in the establishment of God's will on earth, and often, in addition, to buttress the claims of an actual pretender to the Messianic function. Their method was usually the same: they took or adapted earlier apocalyptic writings of similar origin, added an account of the events of their own time, not as a straight historical narrative, but rather as a re-editing of earlier prophecies and traditions revised and expanded to fit these events, and then lovingly developed the growing legend of the final struggle and triumph. The whole was cast in the form of prophecies and attributed to some great figure of antiquity, to Daniel or Elijah, to Enoch or Moses, to Zerubabel or to Rabbi Simon ben Yōhay.

It is to the last named, one of the great Rabbis of the second century A.D., that one of the most interesting of Jewish apocalypses is attributed. The "Prayer of R. Simon ben Yōḥay" was first published by Adolph Jellinek in 1855, from a unique manuscript in the possession of Marco Mortara, the chief Rabbi of Mantua.<sup>1</sup> It appeared to be in part based on an earlier work of similar type entitled "The Secrets of Rabbi Simon ben Yōḥay". The Secrets were first published in a Salonica collection of 1743, and thence reprinted by Jellinek.<sup>2</sup> Jellinek attributed the work to the period of the Crusades, but the historian Heinrich Graetz,<sup>3</sup> by a careful examination, was able to show that the events and rulers referred to are those of the patriarchal and Umayyad Caliphates, and that, with the exception of an added passage of later origin, the work was written during the conflict that ended the Umayyad Caliphate. Despite the objections of Steinschneider,<sup>4</sup> who still preferred the Crusades identification, this view has been generally accepted. Another version of the Secrets is also to be found in the Midrash called *Ten Kings*, published by Horvitz.<sup>5</sup> This includes a passage beginning "These are the future things that were revealed to Rabbi Simon ben Yōḥay" and corresponding broadly, though with some significant differences, to the contents of the Secrets. Horvitz' claim that his version is older than that of the Secrets is difficult to accept, since it contains references to events after the probable date of composition of that work. On the other hand, the *Ten Kings* version contains important details not in the text of the Secrets, and may well be based on another, perhaps earlier, version no longer extant. It is probably such a version that formed the starting point of the author of the Prayer.

The date of the Prayer has not hitherto been seriously disputed. Jellinek assigns it to the period of the Crusades, and finds in it "klare und deutliche Anspielungen auf die Kreuzzüge".<sup>6</sup> Graetz,<sup>7</sup> on the strength of a passage in which he claims to identify the Mongols, attributes it to the thirteenth

<sup>1</sup> A. Jellinek: *Bet ha-Midrash*, Leipzig, 1855, vol. iv, pp. viii-ix and 117-126. Reprinted Jerusalem, 1938. The text was re-edited, with an introduction and notes, by J. Kaufman in *Midhrēshē Ge'ulā*, Tel-Aviv, 1943, pp. 254-286 and 411-14. Dr. Kaufman's edition contains mainly valuable suggestions, but its value is reduced by his numerous and often pointless emendations.

<sup>2</sup> Jellinek: *BM.*, iii, pp. xix and 78-82. A Geniza fragment containing a variant version of the opening paragraphs of the Secrets was published by S. Wertheimer under the title "פרק ר' שמעון בן יוחאי" in *Bāthē Midhrashōth*, Jerusalem, 1894, vol. ii, pp. 25-6. There is also a version of this work in Munich Hebrew MS. No. 222, 107v-111v, with one major and a few minor variants from the Salonica text. My thanks are due to Dr. A. Spitaler for sending me photographs of this MS.

<sup>3</sup> *Geschichte der Juden*, v, note 16, pp. 441-9.

<sup>4</sup> "Apocalypsen mit polemischer Tendenz", *ZDMG.*, xxviii, 1874, pp. 627-659, and xxix, 1875, pp. 162-5. See especially pp. 635 *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup> *Bēth Eged Ha-Aggadōth*, ed. H. M. Horvitz, 1891, i, pp. 16-32. Jellinek's text of the Secrets and the relevant passage from Horvitz's text of the *Ten Kings* are reprinted in Kaufman, pp. 401-5. Dr. Kaufman's ingenious attempt (pp. 162-198) to reconstruct an *Urtext* from the different versions is better left aside.

<sup>6</sup> *BM.*, iv, p. viii.

<sup>7</sup> *Geschichte*, vii, note 7, pp. 449-451.

century. The presence of this passage in the earlier "Secrets" is explained by him as an interpolation from the later text—i.e. from the Prayer itself. Though this particular interpretation has not been accepted by subsequent writers, most have conceded that the passage in question was indeed added. Büttenwieser<sup>1</sup> regards the Crusades dating as beyond question. Baer,<sup>2</sup> followed by Kaufman,<sup>3</sup> refers the apocalypse more especially to the time of the Third Crusade, and attempts a detailed identification of the events to which it refers.

All these views have been based on the assumption that the whole of the historical material in the Prayer subsequent to the passages also found in the Secrets is due to a single author, and refers to the events of his time. Some, as we have seen, have even attributed part of the Secrets to the author of the Prayer. In the commentary that follows I hope to show that this is not the case, and that the Prayer is made up of the following sections:—

(1) A re-edition of the matter contained in the earlier Apocalypse of Simon ben Yōḥay. It does not appear to be based directly on either of the versions available to us, in the Secrets and the Ten Kings, but probably derives from a lost recension, closer to the Secrets than to the Ten Kings. In this material our author has made a number of changes. While some of these may be due to earlier, missing intermediate recensions, some are certainly the work of the final author of the Prayer. These changes are of three main types:—

(a) Literary—the improvement of the presentation, the addition of legendary material from other sources, etc.

(b) The omission of certain passages the historical significance of which was no longer clearly understood.

(c) The addition of allusions to the final author's own time.

The material of the first section is made up as follows:—

(i) The introduction and framework of the vision. This is closely related to the version of the Secrets, but with considerable additions.

(ii) An apocalyptic vision of the rise of Islam and the Caliphate up to the fall of the Umayyads. This is related to the versions of the Secrets and the Ten Kings. By the time the Prayer was written these events were long past and imperfectly remembered, and the Prayer version has therefore important omissions. It can, however, be reconstructed with the aid of the two earlier versions. This apocalypse was written during the wave of Messianic hopes connected with the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. It is quite possible that, as Kaufman<sup>4</sup> suggests, this version is itself not a single vision, but incorporates fragments of an earlier apocalypse, dating from the time of the Islamic conquests.

(iii) An apocalyptic vision of the rise of the 'Abbāsids and the reigns of Saḥfāḥ and Maṣṣūr. Versions of this vision are also to be found in the Secrets

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. i, s.v. "Apocalypses: Neo-Hebraic Apocalyptic Literature", p. 684.

<sup>2</sup> "Eine jüdische Messiasprophetie auf das Jahr 1186 und der dritte Kreuzzug", *MGWJ.*, lxx, 1926, pp. 113-122 and 155-165. See especially pp. 162-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Mid. G.*, pp. 254 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> *Mid. G.*, pp. 162-174.

and the Ten Kings. Graetz was right in his argument that it is of different provenance and was added to the previous matter, but wrong in attributing it to the thirteenth century. It was written during the reign of Maṣṣūr, and was the result of Messianic hopes at that time, possibly connected with the Shi'ite revolt of Muḥammad an-Nafs az-Zakiya.

(2) A version of an apocalypse of Syrian or Palestinian origin, based on the events of the years 969–976—the Fātimid conquest of Egypt, the Carmathian campaigns in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the coming of Alptakin and his Turks, and the Byzantine invasion of Syria under John Tzimiskes. It was probably written before the defeat of Alptakin in 978. Though no such previous apocalypse is known to me, echoes of it are to be found in the Ten Kings and other works.

(3) The additions of the final author of the Prayer describing the arrival of the First Crusade in Palestine, an event which he probably witnessed himself.

(4) Developing from this, the vision proper—the wars of Rome, Ishmael, Israel, Antichrist, and the rest, ending in the triumph of the Messiah.

The following translation is based on Jellinek's text. Where I have adopted an emendation I have indicated it in the notes. In some cases it has been possible to correct the text by reference to the Secrets. I have used the Revised version for all Biblical quotations, and also for Biblical allusions as far as possible without injury to the sense.

The division in sections and paragraphs is added, except where indicated.

#### THE PRAYER OF RABBI SIMON BEN YOHAY

##### I

(1) These are the secret and revealed things that were revealed to Rabbi Simon.

.....

This is Rabbi Simon who had been hidden<sup>1</sup> in a cave previous to this from the Emperor. He had fasted for forty days and nights and prayed to God. Thus did he say in his Prayer: Blessed art Thou, O God, our God and the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the great God, mighty and terrible, merciful Master of heaven and earth, living and enduring for ever and ever and for all eternity; Thou art glorified, praised, adorned, magnified, unified; Thou, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, One, whose Name is in Thee and who art in Thy Name, Thou art hidden from the eyes of all living and Thy Name is hidden, Thou art a wonder and Thy Name is a wonder, Thou art One and Thy Name is One. Thou art He "who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees" (Neh. ix, 7), and madest him to know the sorrow of servitude to the kingdoms that would

<sup>1</sup> חבוי. I read חבוי, as in all the other versions.

enslave his sons (cf. Gen. xv, 13). And now I ask Thee, Lord God, to open to me the gates of prayer and send me an angel to tell me, when will the Messiah, the son of David, come and how will he gather the exiles of Israel from all the places in which they are scattered, and how many wars will they undergo after this reassembling?—that he may make the thing clear to me, by the grace of the Lord God, and “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (Daniel xii, 6).

Rabbi Simon said: At once the gates of heaven were opened to me and I saw visions of God (cf. Ezekiel i, 1). I fell on my face, and behold, a voice spoke to me. “Simon, Simon!” Then I answered the one who spoke to me, and said “What do you say, Lord?” He said to me: “Stand upright”, and when he spoke to me I stood trembling (cf. Daniel x, 11), and I asked him: “What is your name?” He said: “Why do you ask after my name, seeing it is secret?” (cf. Judges xiii, 17–18). I asked him: “When will the Redeemer of Israel come?” He said to me: “God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them” (Exodus ii, 25).

(2) At once he caused the Kenite to pass before me. I asked him: “What are these things?” He answered: “These are the Kenite”. Then he showed me the kingdom of Ishmael, which would follow after the Kenite. At once I wept greatly, and said to him: “Lord! Has he then horns and hooves that he may trample Israel with them?” He answered: “Yes”.

And while yet I spoke with him, behold, another angel, whose name was Metatron, touched me, “and waked me as a man that is wakened out of his sleep” (Zech. iv, 1). And when I saw him I stood trembling, my sorrows turned upon me and I retained no strength, and pangs seized me like the pangs of a woman in childbirth (cf. Daniel x, 8 and 16). He said to me: “Simon!” and I answered “Here am I”. He said to me: “Know that the Holy One, blessed be He, sent me to you to inform you concerning the question that you put before Him. Now that you have seen the Kenite and the kingdom of Ishmael you wept, and you should have wept for the kingdom of Ishmael<sup>1</sup> only, for at the end of that kingdom they will make great slaughter in Israel, beyond reckoning, and make harsh decrees, saying: ‘Whoever reads the Law shall be pierced with the sword’, and they shall convert some of Israel to their religions. And the kingdom of the Kenite will come in that time to Jerusalem, and capture it, and slaughter in it more than 30,000.

“And because of their oppression of Israel, the Holy One, blessed be He, sends Ishmaelites against them, who make war against them in order to save Israel from their hands. Then a crazy man possessed by a spirit arises and speaks lies about the Holy One, blessed be He, and he conquers the land,<sup>2</sup> and there is enmity<sup>3</sup> between them and the sons of Esau.”

<sup>1</sup> *Sic.* Probably an error for the Kenite, v. *infra*, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably Palestine.

<sup>3</sup> אִי־בִרְיָה. Thus also in the Geniza fragment of the Secrets. The printed and Munich texts of the Secrets have אִי־בִרְיָה—terror.

I answered Metatron, and said to him: "Lord! Are the sons of Ishmael then the redemption of Israel?" He said to me: "Did not Isaiah the Prophet say: 'And when he seeth a troop, horsemen in pairs, a troop of asses, a troop of camels'?" (Isaiah xxi, 7). 'Troop' is the kingdom of Media and Persia, 'pairs' is the kingdom of Greece, 'horsemen' is the kingdom of Edom, 'troop of asses' is the Messiah, as it is said: 'lowly, and riding upon an ass' (Zech. ix, 9), 'troop of camels' is the kingdom of Ishmael, in whose days the kingdom of the Messiah will arise. Therefore the 'troop of asses' preceded the 'troop of camels', and the 'troop of camels' will rejoice when the Messiah comes: and the wise men will die and the hands of the sons of Belial will be strengthened. . . .

(3) "Again: 'And he looked on the Kenites' (Numbers xxiv, 21). What parable did the wicked Balaam see? Only this, that Balaam saw a Kenite tribe that was destined to rise up and enslave Israel, and he began to say: 'Ethan is thy dwellingplace'—I see that you live only by the bell of Ethan the Mizrahite<sup>1</sup> (cf. Psalm lxxxix, 1).

(4)<sup>2</sup> "The second king that will arise from the sons of Ishmael loves Israel; he repairs the breaches of the temples, makes war with the sons of Esau, and slaughters their armies.

"Then a king will arise whose name is Marwān.<sup>3</sup> He will be a herdsman of asses, and they will take him from the asses and make him king, and the sons of Edom will come against him and kill him.

"Another will arise in his place, and he will have peace on all sides, and he will love Zion<sup>4</sup> and die in peace.

"And another king will arise in his place, and hold firm the kingdom with his sword and his bow, and there will be strife in his days, sometimes in the east and sometimes in the west, sometimes in the north and sometimes in the south. He will make war on all, and when the Gairūn<sup>5</sup> in the west falls on the sons of Ishmael in Damascus, the kingdom of Ishmael will fall. And of that time it is said: 'The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked' (Isaiah xiv, 5). While the strong men of the sons of Kedar are still with him, a north-east wind will rebel against him and many armies<sup>6</sup> will fall from him: the first on the Tigris, the second on the Euphrates, the third in between. He flees before them, and his sons will be captured and killed and hung on trees.

(5) "'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly' (Isaiah vii, 18). And the Holy One, blessed be He, shall hiss for the bees that are in the land of Assyria (cf. *ibid.*), and they make war with the

<sup>1</sup> ממצלת איתן המזרחי. The Secrets has ממצוות איתן המזרחי—"From the good deeds of Ethan the Ezrahite", who in Midrashic writings is often Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> New paragraph in Jellinek's text.

<sup>3</sup> מריון.

<sup>4</sup> צאן—sheep. Kaufman emends to ציון—Zion.

<sup>5</sup> גיריון, read גיריון, as in the Secrets.

<sup>6</sup> חללים, read חזילים, as in the Secrets.

people of Ashkenaz. The first king who leads them and brings them forth is a servant who rebelled against his master,<sup>1</sup> as it is said: 'Thus saith the Lord . . . to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers' (Isaiah xlix, 7). Who is he 'whom the nation despiseth'?<sup>2</sup> Say, it is the sons of Canaan, who are despised by all the nations. And 'a servant of rulers' means, that there will be a servant of rulers ('*Ebhedh Mōshlīm*'), who rebels against his masters, and they throng to him, and they make war against the sons of Ishmael and kill their strong men and inherit their wealth and possessions. They are very ugly men and wear black and come from the east, and they are bitter and hasty, as it is said: 'For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation' (Habakkuk i, 6). All of them are horsemen, as it is said: 'The horseman mounting' (Nahum iii, 3), and they come from a distant land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs, and they go up to the peaks of mountains, that is, to the mountain of the height of Israel (cf. Ezekiel xvii, 23; xx, 40; xxxiv, 14), breach the temple and quench the lights and tear the doors.

"Then four other kings will arise, two of them revealed and two others who will rise against them, and in their day the son of David will arise, as it is said: 'And in the days of those kings . . .' (Daniel ii, 44).

"The likeness of the first king: an experienced man, but he is not very old.<sup>3</sup> The king is humble, has handsome eyes and fine, black hair, and they are led astray by him.

"And after him another will arise in dispute, and place great armies on the Euphrates, and in one day his armies in the north and in the south will fall, and he will flee and be captured and imprisoned, and as long as he is in prison there will be peace in the land.

"The fourth king loves silver and gold, he is old and tall, and he has a mole on the big toe of his right foot. He makes coins of brass and hides them and stores them under the Euphrates with silver and gold, and they are stored for the King Messiah, as it is said: 'And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places' (Isaiah xlv, 3). In his day the horn of the peoples of the west will rebel, and he will send two armies, and they kill some of the sons of the east, and he sends others.

(6) "And at the beginning of the one week there is no rain, and in the second shafts of hunger, and in the third there will be great hunger and no rain, and the fourth it will be moderate, and in the fifth there will be great satiety, and in the sixth a single star will arise from the east, and on top of it a rod of fire like a lance, and the nations of the world will say: 'There shall come

<sup>1</sup> מֶלֶךְ רִאשׁוֹן מְנַהֵיג אוֹתָם וּמוֹצֵא שְׂמֵרָה עַל אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם. This seems to be a corrupt version of the phrase in the Secrets מֶלֶךְ רִאשׁוֹן שְׂמֵרָה וּמוֹצֵא אוֹתָם עַבְדֵּי שְׂמֵרָה עַל אֲדוֹנֵיהֶם.

<sup>2</sup> The text has '*Ebhedh Mōshlīm*'—an obvious scribal error. I have restored the version of the Secrets.

<sup>3</sup> אִישׁ יָשִׁישׁ וְאִינוּ זָקֵן דְּרַבָּה. Perhaps an allusion to Job, where the word יָשִׁישׁ chiefly occurs, and usually denotes wisdom and experience (e.g. xii, 12 and xxxii, 6).



forth a star out of Jacob' (Numbers xxiv, 17). The time of its shining will be in the first watch of the night, until two hours; it will spend fifteen days in the east, and revolve to the west and spend fifteen days, and if more it is good for Israel."

## II

(7)<sup>1</sup> I returned again to my prayer and also to my fast for forty days, until this angel was revealed to me and said to me: "Ask!", and I said to him: "Lord, what will be the end of these things?" The angel said to me: "After all these things the sons of the west prevail, with great armies. They come mingled and make war against the sons of the east that are in their land and kill them, and those who remain flee before them and come to Alexandria. Some of the sons of the west will pursue them and come there, and there will be a great battle there, and the sons of the east will flee from there and come to Egypt. They will besiege it and take booty and make it desolate, to fulfil what is written: 'Egypt shall be a desolation' (Joel iii, 19). They will pass through Palestine spreading utter destruction, and whoever is captured by them will not return until the Messiah comes."

And when I heard this thing I wept exceedingly. The angel said to me: "Simon, why do you weep?" I answered: "Will there be no deliverance for the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in his (*sic*) days?" He said to me: "The thing is grievous indeed. If you put meat on the fire, you cannot escape from its smell; thus Israel are not saved; but whoever enters in the chamber and flees and hides will be saved, as it is said: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers' (Isaiah xxvi, 20), and: 'Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is taken shall fall by the sword' (Isaiah xiii, 15). They pass through Palestine and pillage, as it is said: 'and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass through' (Daniel xi, 40). They came in the desolate valleys (cf. Isaiah vii, 19), and they are in the midst of it, and there a great battle will take place, which all the prophets have prophesied, and the streams and the waters of the Euphrates will be turned to blood, and those who remain will not be able to drink of it, and thence the kingdom of the east will be broken.

(8) "And after all these things a king of fierce countenance will arise, and last for three and a half years. At the beginning of his kingdom, when he arises, he takes the rich and seizes their money and kills them, and money will not save its owner, as it is said: 'their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them' (Ezekiel vii, 19), and his counsel and intention will not protect him. Whoever recites 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God', he kills, and whoever says 'God of Abraham' will be killed. They will say: 'Let us all return and be as one nation,<sup>2</sup> and abrogate the Sabbaths and festivals and

<sup>1</sup> New paragraph in Jellinek's text.

<sup>2</sup> יחד—probably used in the sense of the Arabic أمة.

New Moons from Israel', as it is said: 'and he shall think to change the times and the law' (Daniel vii, 25). 'Times' are festivals, and 'law' is the Law as it is said: 'a fiery law unto them' (Deuteronomy xxxiii, 2). In his day there will be great trouble for Israel. Whoever is exiled will escape to Upper Galilee, as it is said: 'for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape' (Joel ii, 32), until he reaches Meron.<sup>1</sup> He kills in Israel until he reaches Damascus, and when he reaches Damascus the Holy One, blessed be He, gives help and good fortune to Israel. In his day there will be strife and war in the world, each town will war against its neighbours, city against city and people against people and nation against nation, and there will be no peace for those who go and come, as it is said: 'And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men' (Zephaniah i, 17). The people of God are driven about, and great trouble will beset them for three years, and they will be delivered into his hand until the end of three years, as it is said: 'and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time' (Daniel vii, 25). 'Time' [is a year],<sup>2</sup> 'times' is two years, 'half a time' is half a year, making three [and a half]<sup>2</sup> years, at the end of which the decree and the folly are abrogated, as it is said: 'And from the time that the continual *burnt offering* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days' (Daniel xii, 11)—that is, three and a half years.

"Then a king will arise who will restore them to unbelief, as it is said: 'and they shall set up the abomination that maketh desolate' (Daniel xi, 31). And he rules three months.

(9) "After that the sons of Ishmael make war with the Edomites in the plain of Acre, and at once Assyrians come upon them and capture<sup>3</sup> them, as it is said: 'Until Asshur shall carry thee away captive' (Numbers xxiv, 22), and 'ships *shall come* from the coast of Kittim' (ibid. xxiv, 24). These are the Edomites who are destined to arise in the end of days. When they go forth, they go as thieves, as it is said: 'If thieves came to thee' (Obadiah 5). They make war against the sons of Ishmael and kill many of them; they assemble in the camp of Acre, and the iron breaks the clay in pieces, the legs break the fingers<sup>4</sup> (cf. Daniel ii, 31 ff.), and they flee, naked and without horses. Legions will join them from Edom, and they will come and make war in the plain of Acre, until the horse sinks to its thighs in blood. The children of Israel will flee until they come to the plain of Jericho, and there they will stand, and say to one another: 'Whither do we flee? Let us leave our children and our wives'—and they return and fight another battle in the plain of Megiddo, and the Edomites will flee and go aboard ships, and a wind will go

<sup>1</sup> עד דמשי מרון. Kaufman emends the last word to מרן, and reads "until our Master comes".

<sup>2</sup> Missing in the text. I restore in accordance with the sense and the parallel texts (cf. p. 334 *infra*).

<sup>3</sup> ושובים, read ושובים?

<sup>4</sup> Jellinek suggests an emendation to "the legs are broken even to the fingers (= toes)".

forth, and carry them to Assyria, and they afflict the Assyrians and 'Ehher han-Nahar (cf. Numbers xxiv, 24). And at the end of nine months the sons of Assyria will go forth and destroy the sons of Israel<sup>1</sup> and the sons of Rome, as it is said: 'Until Asshur shall carry thee away captive' (Numbers xxiv, 22). And when you see Assyrians<sup>2</sup> going forth and treading in the land of Israel, they make peace, and Elijah, of blessed memory, goes forth and gives the tidings of peace, as it is said: 'And this *man* shall be *our* peace; when the Assyrian shall come into our land' (Micah v, 5). The sons of Italy seek to make war with them, and to the sons of Ishmael the kingdom will almost return; they do not have time to send away their wives before Assyria captures them.

"And at once the daughter of a voice goes forth and proclaims in all the places where Israel is<sup>3</sup>: 'Go forth and avenge the vengeance of God on Edom', as it is said: 'And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel' (Ezekiel xxv, 14). And at once the young men of Israel gather and give ear, and they enthrone a king of the seed of David, and discord arises between these and these, and the sons of the land of Israel rebel against the seed of David, to fulfil what is said: 'So Israel rebelled against the house of David, unto this day' (II Chronicles, x, 19). 'Unto this day' means unto the day the king Messiah will come. The two parties come to grips, and the daughter of a voice goes forth and twitters: 'That which hath been is that which shall be' (Ecclesiastes i, 9)—He is the Holy One, blessed be He, who was before the creation of the world and will be after the destruction of the world—'and that which hath been done is that which shall be done' (ibid.). Then she speaks again and says: 'As Joshua did to Jericho and to its king, thus do to the nations of the world'. And they say: 'But we have not the ark of the covenant with us, as Joshua had', and she answers them: 'There was nothing in the ark but two tablets of stone, with the seal "Hear O Israel"'. At once they all make a great shout and cry: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One', and they compass Jericho, and at once the wall falls down flat, and they enter inside and find the young men dead in the streets, to fulfil what is said: 'Therefore shall her young men fall in her streets, and all her men of war shall be brought to silence in that day' (Jeremiah I, 30). They will kill in the town for three days and three nights, and then they will gather all her booty into the street, and a rumour will come upon them from the land of Israel, and they will be in great fear."

### III

(10)<sup>4</sup> I returned to prayer again before God, in fasting and sackcloth and ashes, until I saw, and behold, a hand touched me and caused me to stand on

<sup>1</sup> *Sic.* Read Ishmael?

<sup>2</sup> שוורים. Jellinek emends to אשורים.

<sup>3</sup> בכל המקומות שבו ישראל. Jellinek emends שבו to שבני, Kaufman to שבהם. I have adopted the latter reading.

<sup>4</sup> New paragraph in Jellinek's text.

my feet, and he said to me: "Ask, righteous man, what you would ask". Then I asked him, and said to him: "And at the end of these things how will all Israel be gathered together from the four corners of the earth, and what will be the manner of their going forth from under the hand of the kingdoms? And if they go forth, whither will they go, and what will be the manner of their going, and what will they be able to do? I wish you to tell me these things and their like until the end of the matter."

Then he answered me from the doors of heaven and said to me: "At the end of the kingdom of the sons of Ishmael the Romans will go forth against Jerusalem and make war with the sons of Ishmael, and the land<sup>1</sup> will be conquered by them. They enter into it and kill many of the sons of Ishmael there. They make many in the city to fall dead, and take many captives among the daughters of Ishmael, and dash out the brains of the children, and every day they slaughter children to Jesus. At that time Israel will suffer great sorrow. And at that time God will awaken the tribes of Israel and they will come to Jerusalem the Holy City, and they will find it written in the Law: 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud' (Exodus xiii, 21)—and it is also written: 'for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward' (Isaiah lii, 12). They will go about in mist and in cloud, and they will make war against the Edomites and kill many of them, and desolation will go forth in the world, for the tribes have come. And in that time the verse will be fulfilled in Israel: 'and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book' (Daniel xii, 1). The nations shall rise up against Israel and kill many of them, and many of the 'people of the land'<sup>2</sup> transgress, and they torture with chains many of the pious to make them leave God's Law.

#### IV

(11) "And while for a short time they are in this trouble God will bring a great and strong wind, a great thunder and a black cloud the like of which has not been seen in the world, and from the midst of that wind the Holy One, blessed be He, will scatter the tribes in every town, and concerning them it is said: 'Who are these that fly as a cloud?' (Isaiah lx, 8). A few men of Israel will gather to Jerusalem, and they will find no bread, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will turn the sand into flour for Israel, and concerning that time it is said: 'There shall be abundance of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains' (Psalm lxxii, 16). Nehemiah ben Hūshiēl will arise and give signs in the word of God. A king will arise and deny religion and pretend to be a servant of God, while his heart is not true with him, and a great thunder will go forth into the world, and all the world will fear it. And Israel will gather to Nehemiah ben Hūshiēl, and the king of Egypt will make peace with

<sup>1</sup> Presumably Palestine.

<sup>2</sup> מַעֲמֵי הָאָרֶץ—i.e. the ignorant mass of the population.

him, and he will kill all the cities that are about Jerusalem, as Tiberias and Damascus and Ascalon. The nations of the world will hear, and fear and terror will fall on them. The sign that will be in that time, is that the stars will be seen in blood. And of that time it is said: 'The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood' (Joel ii, 31). And the Holy One, blessed be He, sends ten plagues to the nations of the world, as He sent to Egypt, to fulfil what is said: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people' (Isaiah xi, 11).

"They said that there is in Rome a statue of white marble, in the form of a beautiful girl, created since the six days of the Beginning, and the sons of Belial come from the nations of the world and lie with her, and she falls pregnant, and at the end of nine months she bursts, and a male in the form of a man comes forth from her, twelve cubits long and two cubits wide, with red twisted eyes. The hair of his head is red as gold, and the soles of his feet are green, and he has two heads, and they call him Armilus. He will come to Edom and say to them: 'I am your Messiah. I am your God'. He leads them into error, and at once they believe in him and enthrone him, and all the sons of Esau join together and come to him, and he goes and brings tidings to all the cities, and says to the sons of Esau: 'Bring me my Law which I gave to you'. The nations of the world still come and bring a scroll<sup>1</sup> . . . and he says to them: 'This is what I gave you', and says: 'I am your God' and 'I am your Messiah and your God'. And in that hour he sends to Nehemiah and to all Israel and says to them: 'Bring me your Law and bear witness to me that I am God'. And at once all Israel are astonished and afraid. And in that hour Nehemiah will arise with three men of the sons of Ephraim. They go with him, and they have a scroll of the Law with them, and cry before him: 'I am, and Thou shalt have none other'.<sup>2</sup> And he says: 'There is nothing of this in your Law, and I will not let you rest until you believe that I am God, as the nations of the world have believed in me'. At once Nehemiah rises up against him and says to him: 'You are not God, but Satan'. He asks them: 'Why do you give me the lie? I shall command that you be killed', and he says to his servants: 'Seize Nehemiah'. At once he rises with 30,000 strong men of Israel and makes war on him and kills 200,000 of the army of Armilus. And Armilus will grow angry and gather all the armies of the nations of the world, and he makes war on the children of Israel and kills a thousand thousand of them, and even kills Nehemiah at noontime. And of that time it is said: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day' (Amos viii, 9). Those who remain of Israel will flee to the wilderness of the peoples (cf. Ezekiel xx, 35), and dwell there

<sup>1</sup> A word in the text is effaced here.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to the first two commandments.

forty-five days without bread or water, but only the grass of the fields will be their food. And after forty-five days Armilus will come and make war in Egypt and capture it, as it is said: 'and the land of Egypt shall not escape' (Daniel xi, 42). Then he turns his face again towards Jerusalem to destroy it a second time, as it is said: 'And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him' (ibid. xi, 45).

"'And in that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince' (Daniel xii, 1), and blow the trumpet three times, as it is said: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown' (Isaiah xxvii, 13). That trumpet is the right horn of the ram of Isaac, and the Holy One, blessed be He, lengthens it to a thousand cubits. He blows a blast, and the Messiah son of David and Elijah reveal themselves. They both go to Israel who are in the wilderness of the peoples, and Elijah says to them: 'This is the Messiah', and he restores their hearts and strengthens their hands, as it is said: 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not' (Isaiah xxxv, 3-4). And all the children of Israel will hear the sound of the trumpet, and they will know that He has ransomed Israel, as it is said: 'For the Lord hath ransomed Jacob' (Jeremiah xxxi, 11). 'And they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria' (Isaiah xxvii, 13). And at once the fear of God falls upon the peoples and all the nations, and Israel returns with the Messiah until they come to the wilderness of Judah, and all the children of Israel meet, and they come to Jerusalem, and go up to the heights of the house of David that remain from the destruction. The Messiah will sit there, and Armilus will hear that a king has arisen to Israel. He gathers the armies of all the nations of the world and they will come to the king Messiah and to Israel. The Holy One, blessed be He, will fight for Israel, and says to the Messiah: 'Sit thou at my right hand' (Psalm cx, 1), and the Messiah says to Israel: 'Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord' (Exodus xiv, 13). And at once the Holy One, blessed be He, goes forth, and fights them, as it is said: 'Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations' (Zechariah xiv, 3), and it is written: 'At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth' (Zephaniah iii, 20)."

Amen! May that time and that hour draw near.

#### COMMENTARY

##### I

(1) This contains the introduction and describes the circumstances in which Rabbi Simon received his revelations. After the first line some legends of Talmudic origin relating to the lifetime of Rabbi Simon are told. They are omitted from the translation, as of no interest to our present purpose. The

remainder of the introduction is a very much expanded version of the earlier texts, which begin as follows :—

*Secrets*

These are the secrets which were revealed to Rabbi Simon ben Yōhay when he was hidden in a cave from the Emperor, the king of Edom, and stood in prayer for forty days and forty nights. He began thus : “ Lord God, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy servant ? ” (cf. Psalm lxxx, 5). At once the secrets of the End and the Hidden things were revealed to him, and he began to sit and expound. . . .

*Ten Kings*

These are from the future things that were revealed to Rabbi Simon bar Yōhay when he was hidden for thirteen years in a cave from the dominion of Edom, who had decreed destruction on Israel. He stood in prayer and fasting for three days and three nights, and at the end he began and said : “ Lord God, how long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy servant ” ? At once the secrets of the End and the sealed things (cf. Daniel xii, 4 and 9) were revealed to him, and he began to expound. . . .

It will be seen that the version of the Prayer is closer to the Secrets than to the Ten Kings. The actual prayer is introduced from the Hechalot.

(2) Here the vision begins. Rabbi Simon is shown the two Empires that were still to rule, the Kenite and Ishmael. The first is apparently here identified with Edom, and means Rome and Byzantium. The second is obviously Islam. The Islamic Empire comes, says the angel, to rescue Israel from Byzantium, and Rabbi Simon's doubts about an Ishmaelite redemption are silenced with a quotation from Isaiah 21.

The corresponding passages in the Secrets and the Ten Kings are as follows :—

*Secrets*

He saw the Kenite. When he saw the kingdom of Ishmael that was coming, he began to say : “ Was it not enough, what the wicked kingdom of Edom did to us, but we must have the kingdom of Ishmael too ? ” At once Metatron the prince of the countenance answered and said : “ Do not fear, son of man, for the Holy One, blessed be He, only brings the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness. He raises up over them a Prophet according to His will and will conquer the land for them and they will come and restore it in greatness,

*Ten Kings*

Rabbi Samuel says, concerning the words of Rabbi Ishmael, who used to say : “ How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, only brings forth the kingdom of Ishmael in order to save Israel by it ? ” As it is said by Isaiah the prophet, who saw ‘ a troop, horsemen in pairs, a troop of asses, a troop of camels ’. This teaches that at first he will return to the custom of the seed of his nation who oppress and distress the world with heavy taxes. ‘ He shall hearken diligently with much heed ’ (Isaiah xxi, 7). “ Heed ” : Rabbi Simon says :

and there will be great terror between them and the sons of Esau".<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Simon answered and said: "How do we know that they are our salvation?" He answered: "Did not the Prophet Isaiah say thus, that he saw a troop with horsemen in pairs, etc. Why did he put the troop of asses before the troop of camels, when he need only have said: 'A troop of camels and a troop of asses?' But when he goes forth riding a camel the dominion will arise through<sup>2</sup> the rider on an ass. Again: 'a troop of asses', since he rides on an ass, shows that they are the salvation of Israel, like the salvation of the rider on an ass . . . [i.e. the Messiah]. . ."

"When Isaiah saw that there was peace in his mouth he rejoiced". And Rabbi Simon [also] said: "What is written 'And when he seeth a troop, horsemen in pairs, a troop of asses, a troop of camels' means this: 'troop' is Babylon, 'pairs' is Medea, 'horsemen' is Greece, 'troop of asses' is Edom, 'troop of camels' is the kingdom of Ishmael. When he saw the salvation that was to come about he said: 'The burden upon Arabia, in the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanites' (Isaiah xxi, 13)". Rabbi Simon says: "When Isaiah saw that wicked things were to arise from him who would oppress Israel and take the reward of life from the living and the reward of the dead from the slain, he began to cry out and say 'much heed'". Thus Rabbi Simon used to say: "At the beginning of his dominion, when he goes forth, he will seek to do harm to Israel, but great men of Israel will join with him and give him a wife from among them, and there will be peace between him and Israel. He will conquer all the kingdom and come to Jerusalem. . ."

It will be seen at once that the version of the Prayer differs in several important respects from the two earlier ones, which in turn differ from one another. In the first place, it contains several additions. While most of these seem to be purely literary in intention, one at least is historically significant—the reappearance of the Kenite at the end of the dominion of Ishmael and his conquest of Jerusalem, with great slaughter. In this it is not difficult to see a reflection of the final author's own time, and a reference to the entry of the Crusaders into Jerusalem in 1099, in which, as we shall see later, he saw the

<sup>1</sup> The Geniza fragment reads "He raises over them a crazy prophet, possessed by a spirit, and he conquers the land for them and they come and seize dominion in greatness and there will be great enmity between them and the sons of Esau" (Wertheimer, pp. 25–6). The Munich MS. (107v) offers a third reading, closer to this version than to the printed text. (Cf. Steinschneider, "Apocalypsen . . .", *ZDMG.*, xxviii, p. 635, note 25.)

<sup>2</sup> בידו, read ביד ?



first sign of the approaching end. The "great slaughter" of Jews and Muslims by the Crusaders is attested by the Arabic sources.<sup>1</sup>

Kaufman<sup>2</sup> has suggested that the whole of this passage is based on a fragment of an earlier apocalypse, dating from the time of the conquests, the author of which saw in the rise and spread of Islam itself the preliminaries of redemption. When these hopes were dashed, says Kaufman, later writers deleted the eschatological conclusion and revised the "prophecy" itself in the spirit of their own time. A comparison of the three versions and of the variants of the Secrets tends to confirm this hypothesis, and to show that, while the text in the Secrets expresses a Messianic hope from these events, the others are subsequent and probably independent reflections of disillusionment.

In the Secrets, the role of Ishmael as redeemer is clearly and forcefully stated by the angel, and Rabbi Simon's interjection amounts to no more than a rhetorical question. In the Ten Kings, on the other hand, he expresses some doubt, and the whole topic is reduced from a divine pronouncement to a Midrashic debate between Rabbi Simon and a supporter of Ishmael's role who is himself significantly named Rabbi Ishmael.<sup>3</sup> The blessings of Ishmael are moreover to be tempered by heavy taxes and wicked and extortionate kings.

Again, in the Salonica text of the Secrets, Muḥammad appears as a Prophet whom God "will raise up over them according to His will". In the Ten Kings there is no reference either to God or to Prophet, and the very portrait of Muḥammad has become confused with that of the early Caliphs. In the Prayer, the disillusionment has gone still further, and he has become "a crazy man, possessed by a spirit".<sup>4</sup> This phrase, probably an allusion to Hosea ix, 7, became in time the familiar term for Muḥammad in Jewish polemics against Islam.<sup>5</sup> The allusion in the Ten Kings to his seeking "to do harm to Israel" is presumably an echo of Muḥammad's dealings with the Jews in Medina, while the reference to the "great men of Israel" who join him derives from a legend

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Qalānisi, *Dhail Ta'rikh Dimashq*, ed. Amedroz, Beirut, 1908, pp. 136-7 (= H. A. R. Gibb, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, London, 1932, pp. 47-9); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi't-Ta'rikh*, ed. Tornberg, Leiden, 1851-1876, x, 193-4 (= *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, Paris, 1841 ff., *Historiens Orientaux* I, pp. 198-9); Ibn Muyassar, *Annales d'Egypte*, ed. Massé, Cairo, 1919, p. 39 (= *Recueil, Hist. Or.*, III, 463-4).

<sup>2</sup> *Mid. G.*, pp. 162-174.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Rabbi Ishmael to whom fifteen prophecies concerning the actions of the Arab conquerors are attributed in the *Pirgē d'Rabbi Eli'ezer*, chapter 30 (English translation by G. Friedlander, London, 1916, p. 221). This work was used by the compiler of the Ten Kings.

<sup>4</sup> This version also appears in the Geniza and Munich versions of the Secrets. The first has שוטה נביא ואיש הרחוק, the second שוטה נביא ומשונה. It is possible that the Salonica version is an editorial emendation intended to forestall objections from the Muslim authorities; but the disagreement between the Geniza and Munich versions makes it likelier that they are independent revisions, and that the Salonica version is authentic.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Berliner, *Quellenschriften zur jüdischen Geschichte und Literatur*, I, Frankfurt, 1896, pp. ix-x.

occurring in both Christian and Jewish sources, and is probably based on a distorted version of one or two episodes in the Muslim tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Metatron—the name of the Chief of the Angels in Rabbinic literature.

“They will make great slaughter, etc.”—the subject of this sentence is probably the Kenites, i.e. the Crusaders, and not Ishmael. Cf. § 10 below.

“And because of their oppressions”—i.e. the Byzantines, to whom the narrative now returns, after the parenthesis on the Crusaders.

The passage from Isaiah is a popular one with apocalyptic authors. It will be noted that the interpretation in the Prayer differs somewhat from both the other versions, though not on the essential point of the identification of the camels with Islam. The identification of the asses with the Messiah, implicit in the Secrets and explicit in the Prayer, is omitted entirely from the Ten Kings, and the other identifications are adjusted there accordingly. This too may reflect the disappointment of the earlier Messianic hope connected with the rise of Islam.

The same passage from Isaiah was of course also used in favour of Islam by Muslim writers like ‘Alī at-Ṭabarī (ninth century) and Bīrūnī (d. 1048), and was refuted by a Christian writer as early as the beginning of the tenth century.<sup>2</sup> It occurs also in the letter to Yemen attributed to Maimonides.

“The wise men will die, etc.”—this sentence may be corrupt or out of place.

(3) This passage is reproduced from the Secrets, and would seem to be a Midrashic gloss on the foregoing.

(4) An abridged and fragmentary account of the patriarchal and Umayyad Caliphates. The final author has made drastic cuts in the earlier versions. To understand this passage we may refer to the versions of the Secrets and the Ten Kings, which are as follows:—

#### *Secrets*

The second king who arises from Ishmael will be a lover of Israel; he restores their breaches and the breaches of the temple. He hews Mount Moriah and makes it all straight, and builds a mosque<sup>3</sup>

#### *Ten Kings*

. . . he will conquer all the kingdom and come to Jerusalem and bow down there and make war with the Edomites and they will flee before him and he will seize the kingship by force and then he will die.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Mann, “A Polemical Work against Karaite and other Sectaries”, *JQR.*, n.s. xii, 1921–2, pp. 123–150; J. Leveen, “Mohammad and his Jewish Companions”, *JQR.*, n.s. xvi, 1925–6, pp. 399–406; M. Schwabe, “Mohammed’s Ten Jewish Companions”, *Tarbiz*, ii, 1930, pp. 74–89. A Christian form of the legend occurs in Theophanes (ed. De Boor i, 342), and thence in the *De Administrando Imperio* of Constantine X. For a discussion see the commentary to the forthcoming English translation of the last-named work.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, Chicago, 1946, pp. 17–18.

<sup>3</sup> מִסְגָּד—a literal equivalent of the Arabic مسجد.

there on the temple rock,<sup>1</sup> as it is said: "thy nest is set in the rock" (Numbers xxiv, 21). He makes war against the sons of Esau and kills his armies and takes many captives from them, and he will die in peace and with great honour.

And a great king will arise from Hazarmaveth<sup>2</sup> and rule for a short time, and the strong men of the sons of Kedar<sup>3</sup> will rise up against him and kill him.

They will raise up another king whose name is Mryaw,<sup>4</sup> and they will take him from the sheep and asses and raise him to kingship, and four arms will rise from him and they will repair the temple.

At the end of the kingdom of the four arms another king will arise and reduce the measures and weights and spend three years in peace. And there will be strife in the world in his days and he will send great armies against the Edomites and there they will die<sup>5</sup> in hunger, and they will have much food with them and he withholds from them and none will give them,<sup>6</sup> and the sons of Edom will rise up against the sons of Ishmael and kill them and the sons of Ishmael will rise up and burn the food and those who remain will flee and go forth.

Then the great king will arise and rule 19 years. These are his signs: reddish, cross-eyed,<sup>7</sup> and with three

One will arise from Hazarmaveth in his place, and another will arise and kill him, and he will go up to Jerusalem and hew Mount Moriah and make it all straight.

And another will arise and rule after him for a short time.

And another king greater than all will arise, and they will call him Marwan, and four arms will rise from him, and they will repair the wall of the temple.

And another king will arise and rule 19 years, and he will eat the tranquillity of the sons of Ishmael.

<sup>1</sup> אבן שתיה.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Genesis x, 27. This is usually equated with Hadramawt.

<sup>3</sup> A common term for the Arabs in Hebrew literature.

<sup>4</sup> מריאן. A very slight emendation gives מריאן—Marwān.

<sup>5</sup> ימות, read ימותו.

<sup>6</sup> Munich MS. reads: "They will have food with them, but he will withhold it from them and not give it to them."

<sup>7</sup> שיפן העין. Graetz emends to שפוף העין, Steinschneider (p. 638, n. 25) connects with the Arabic root شفن. Either could bear the meaning cross-eyed. The word may be connected with صافن from صافى (cf. Hirschberg and Lippert, *Die Augenheilkunde des Ibn Sina*, Leipzig, 1902, p. 172).

birthmarks, one on his brow, one on his right hand, and one on his left arm. He will plant young trees and build ruined towns and burst open the abysses to raise the water to irrigate his trees. The grandsons of his sons<sup>1</sup> will eat much, and whoever rises up against him will be delivered into his hand. The land will be quiet in his days and he will die in peace.

Another king will arise and seek to deflect the waters of the Jordan ; he will bring distant men from strange lands to dig and to make a canal and to raise the waters of the Jordan to irrigate the land. And the excavation of the land will collapse upon them and kill them<sup>3</sup> and their chiefs will hear and rise up against the king and kill him.

Another king will arise with might, a man of war, and there will be strife in the world in his days, and this is the sign for you ; when you see that the western Gairūn in the west of the mosque of the sons of Ishmael in Damascus falls, his kingdom falls. They enter and go out with taxes, and even the kingdom of Ishmael will fall, and of them he says : "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked" (Isaiah xiv, 5).<sup>4</sup> And this is indeed Marwan. While the strong men of the sons of Kedar are still with him, the north-eastern corner will rebel against him, and they will go against him, and three great armies will fall from him on the Tigris and in Persia.<sup>5</sup> He flees before them and is captured and killed, and they will hang his sons on the tree.

And another will arise and seek to scrape from Mēmre (*sic*),<sup>2</sup> but his intention will not be fulfilled, and the chiefs of Kedar will rise up against him and kill him.

Another will arise who will reduce the weights and measures.

Another will arise and struggle in east and west, and after that "there is no peace", said the Lord.

The Secrets then goes on to speak of the coming of Messiah, while the Ten Kings continues with the historical narrative.

<sup>1</sup> ובני בני בני. Kaufman suggests an emendation to ובניני "and his buildings".

<sup>2</sup> לרדות ממימרי.

<sup>3</sup> ותהרגם, *read* ויהרגם.

<sup>4</sup> Munich MS. adds : "The staff is none other than Ishmael."

<sup>5</sup> פֶּרַס. Munich MS. reads פֶּרַת—Euphrates.

In these two texts we clearly have earlier and fuller versions of an apocalypse written during the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate, on which this section of the Prayer is based. The significance of this passage of the Secrets was first recognized by Graetz,<sup>1</sup> and despite the objection of Steinschneider,<sup>2</sup> his analysis is in essentials correct, though not in all details. With the much greater knowledge of early Islamic history that we now possess, a more accurate identification is possible, and most of Steinschneider's objections can be met.

Some of the Umayyad Caliphs are easily recognizable. Marwan I appears by name in the Prayer and the Ten Kings, and in a slightly corrupt form in the Secrets. The "sheep and asses" are an allusion to the obscurity in which he spent the last year of Mu'āwiyā's reign. The "four arms" are of course the four sons of 'Abd al-Malik who became Caliphs. This succession of brothers also struck the author of the apocalyptic fragment published by Lévi.<sup>3</sup> The repair of the temple refers to the building of the mosque in Jerusalem by 'Abd al-Malik.

Sulaiman is easily identified by his unsuccessful campaign against Constantinople. The shortage of supplies in the Arab camp and the burning of the reserves by Maslama is well-known from Arabic sources.<sup>4</sup> The reference to weights and measures may be an echo of the fiscal measures imposed on Sulaiman by the cost of the campaign, or possibly an echo of the reorganization begun under 'Abd al-Malik. In the Ten Kings this rubric has got out of place.

The great king who rules for 19 years and overcomes all his enemies can only be Hishām. His activities as a builder and as a "planter of trees" are well known.<sup>5</sup> The Arabic sources attest his squint,<sup>6</sup> his numerous progeny,<sup>7</sup> and the tranquillity of the land in his days.<sup>8</sup>

All would seem to point to Walid II as the king who sought to deflect the Jordan—his position immediately after Hishām, his activities around Palestine, his violent end at the hands of "the chiefs of Kedar". Even the canal is confirmed. Ṭabarī records a conversation in which the Caliph enquires about a canal he had dug in the Jordan district, and asks how much of it remains.<sup>9</sup>

This confirms the reading of the Secrets against the obscure and probably

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte*, v, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> "Apocalypsen", loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Israel Lévi, "Une Apocalypse Judéo-Arabe", *REJ.*, lxi, 1914, pp. 177–182. Cf. Wertheimer, ii, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Ṭabarī, *Annales*, Leiden, 1879–1901, ii, 1316; cf. *Kitāb al-'Uyūn* (in *Fragmenta Historicum Arabicorum*, ed. De Goeje, Leiden, 1871), p. 29; Ibn al-Aṭhīr, v, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the interesting observations of J. Sauvaget, "Remarques sur les Monuments Omeyyades", *JA.*, 1939, pp. 1–13.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, ed. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, Paris, 1861–1877, v, p. 466; *Tanbih*, ed. De Goeje, Leiden, 1894, p. 322 (= Carra de Vaux, *Le Livre de L'Avertissement*, Paris, 1897, p. 417).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. F. Gabrieli, *Il Califato di Hishām*, Alexandria, 1935, p. 139.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>9</sup> ii, 1803. Quoted by I. Braslavski, "Hat Walid II den Jordan ablenken wollen?", *JPOS.*, xiii, 1933, pp. 97–100.

corrupt reference to an unknown Mēmre in the Ten Kings. The whole of this rubric is strikingly reminiscent of the oft-quoted passage from Severus ibn al-Muqaffa', which Lammens referred to the building of Mshatta.<sup>1</sup> The two differ in two important respects—that Severus makes no mention of the Jordan, and that the Secrets speaks of no town or building. They agree on the movement of water, on the importation of workers from other parts, and on their revolt. The possibility cannot be excluded that both passages refer to the same events, in which case the Mshatta identification of the Severus text would be very unlikely in view of the distance of the site from the Jordan, and some other site nearer the Jordan would have to be found.

The last king is of course Marwān II, whose hopeless struggle against the 'Abbāsid advance is clearly depicted. The Gairūn, as Steinschneider<sup>2</sup> showed, is the Bāb Jairūn, the eastern gate of the mosque of Damascus, named, according to the Arabic sources, after a pre-Islamic temple. The Ten Kings and the Prayer both place the Gairūn in the west. The Secrets mentions it twice, once in the west and once in the east. The passage may refer to the "Day of Jairūn", the clash in the mosque between Qais and Kalb, that culminated in the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ. If so, the seer who saw in it a portent of the fall of the kingdom of Ishmael was not far wrong.

Some uncertainty remains concerning the beginning of the passage, where the patriarchal caliphs and Mu'āwiya all seem to be confused. If one remembers that the writer was probably a Palestinian Jew, for whom Arab rule was for long directly represented by Mu'āwiya, first as governor and then as Caliph, this is not surprising. The vicissitudes of the Caliphate in Arabia and Iraq cannot have made any deep impression on such a person. The "second king" who dies in peace and honour after many victories can only be Mu'āwiya, to whom some of the actions of 'Umar in Syria during Mu'āwiya's governorship are erroneously attributed. The king from Hazarmaveth who was murdered by the strong men of the sons of Kedar is a distant echo of the reign and death of 'Alī in Iraq. In the Ten Kings version the personality of 'Umar is confused with that of Muḥammad himself, probably by the omission of some linking phrase like "then another king arose", or something of the sort, and Mu'āwiya comes in his proper place after 'Alī. The implication that Mu'āwiya murdered 'Alī obviously means no more than that he was the beneficiary of his death. There is a brief reference to Mu'āwiya's coronation visit to Jerusalem and to the reign of Yazīd I after him.

Very little of all this remains in the version of the Prayer, which retains only four kings. Yet even in these there are important divergencies from the earliest versions. Marwān is surprisingly killed by the sons of Edom. This is probably due to the addition to his rubric of a misunderstood fragment from the account of Sulaimān a little further down. The account of Marwān II is

<sup>1</sup> *Études sur le Siècle des Omeyyades*, Beirut, 1930, p. 348 et seq. Cf. Sauvaget, "Remarques", pp. 31-5.

<sup>2</sup> "Apocalypsen", *ZDMG.*, xxviii, pp. 638-645.

longer, and may derive from an earlier variant text. One king is entirely new. It is the successor of Marwān, who "will have peace on all sides, and . . . will love Zion [?], and die in peace". He is probably 'Abd al-Malik, who appears in the other versions only in indirect allusions.

(5) Graetz<sup>1</sup> quite correctly pointed out that this was not part of the same apocalypse as the foregoing, but a later addition, dealing with other events. His suggestion was that it was in reality a part of the Prayer, inserted in the Secrets by later copyists, and referring to the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century. Baer and Kaufman, while accepting the first part of his theory, reject his specific identification. The first regards it as part of the general apocalyptic matter, the second as an allusion to the Seljuq invasions of the eleventh century, superimposed on a misplaced description of four Umayyad Caliphs.

Both explanations present obvious difficulties, and even the reference of the passage to the author of the Prayer is open to grave objection. The clear assertion of the coming of Messiah during the reign of the fourth king is difficult to reconcile with the long historical narrative that follows if both are the work of one author, and suggests that what we have here is an independent apocalypse of some date in between the original Secrets and the Prayer.

Starting from this hypothesis, it is not difficult to identify the four kings. The "bitter and hasty" men who come from the east to overthrow the kingdom of Ishmael are the 'Abbāsid armies—Mawālī and subject peoples rebelling against their Arab masters. Canaan is *Khurāsān*. Horsemen (*Pārāshim*) may be a pun on Persians, and the rebellious servant of rulers (*'Ebhedh Mōshlīm*) is certainly a pun on Abū Muslim, the leader of the 'Abbāsid propaganda. The wearing of black, explained by Kaufman as a reference to the Seljuq acceptance of 'Abbāsid suzerainty, applies much more forcefully to the rise of the 'Abbāsids themselves. Ashkenaz is mentioned only in the Prayer; the Secrets has Egypt. Krauss has suggested that Ashkenaz means the Khazars and points out that the term is so interpreted by Karaite commentators of the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

The identity of the four kings becomes clearer when we compare the versions in the Secrets and the Ten Kings :—

#### *Secrets*

Four kings will arise over them,  
two princes and two deputies :

(1) A . . . <sup>3</sup> man who enthrones a  
king in his lifetime, of the seed of  
royalty.

(2) The king who rules over them

#### *Ten Kings*

These are the kings who will  
rise from them :

(1) The first is '*Ebhedh Mōshlīm*,  
as it is said : " Thus saith the Lord  
etc. "

(2) The second is of royal seed.

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte*, v, p. 449, and vii, p. 449 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> A. H. Silver, *Messianic Speculation in Israel*, New York, 1927, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> קִנְיָן שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר. I can find no meaning for this expression which occurs in both the printed and Munich texts. An emendation of the final ק to כ would give "a clownish man", which hardly seems satisfactory.

is humble, has handsome eyes and fine hair, and dies in peace. . . .

(3) After him a king will arise in dispute and raise great armies on the Euphrates, and they will all fall in one day, and he will flee and be imprisoned, and as long as he is imprisoned there will be peace in the land, and his brothers rule in every land.

(4) The fourth king who will rise over them loves silver and gold. He is dark and tall and old and gluttonous,<sup>1</sup> and kills those who brought him forth and enthroned him. He will make ships of brass and fill them with silver and gold and hide them under the waters of the Euphrates to conceal them for his sons . . . in his day the horn of the west will rebel and he will send many armies there and kill the sons of the east, and again he sends many armies, and they come and kill the sons of the west and dwell in their land.

(3) The third will arise in dispute.

(4) The fourth is a brother of the second . . . the horn of the south-west will rebel against the fourth king, and he will send very many armies there. In the first war the sons of the west will conquer and in the second the sons of the east will conquer.

Both versions then go on to speak of the fall of the Gairūn in Damascus and of the coming of Messiah.

The four kings—two princes and two deputies—thus stand revealed from the three texts as Abū Muslim, the Caliph Saffāh, the rebel ‘Abdallāh, and the Caliph Manṣūr, “the brother of the second”. The physical descriptions of the two Caliphs are supported by the Arabic historians. Saffāh, says Mas‘ūdī, was “tall and fair, with an aquiline nose, a handsome face and curly, plentiful hair”.<sup>2</sup> He was 33 years old when he died. Manṣūr was “tall, dark, and slender, thin-bearded and black-haired”.<sup>3</sup> It was Manṣūr who ordered the execution of Abū Muslim and his associates. He was notorious among the Arabs for his thrift, which won him the nickname of Abū-d-Dawāniq, the Father of Farthings (= “coins of brass”?). His struggle with the west and south-west is a reference to the Sufyānī and Shī‘ite risings in Syria and Arabia.

From all this it would seem that this apocalypse was written early in the reign of Manṣūr, probably in Iraq or Syria.

There is some other evidence of Messianic expectation among the Jews

<sup>1</sup> ברינר, read ברינר.

<sup>2</sup> *Tanbīh*, p. 339 (= Carra de Vaux, p. 436). On the “humility” of Saffāh, v. A. K. Dūrī, *Al-‘Asr al-‘Abbāsī al-‘Awwal*, Baghdad, 1945, pp. 65-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Tanbīh*, p. 341 (= Carra de Vaux, p. 439); cf. Ṭabarī, iii, 391.



during his reign. A Geniza fragment on the signs of the coming of Messiah<sup>1</sup> mentions Manṣūr by name as a ruler of Ishmael during the last days, and a well-known passage in the *Pirqē d'Rabbī Eli'ezer*, after prophesying the activities of the sons of Ishmael, concludes that the Messiah will come after the reigns of two brothers. These have been identified as Amīn and Ma'mūn,<sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-Malik and his brother 'Abd al-'Azīz,<sup>3</sup> and even as Mu'āwiya and Ziyād.<sup>4</sup> Taken with this other evidence, they are more likely to be Saffāḥ and Manṣūr. According to *Shahrastānī* the Jewish pseudo-Messiah Abū 'Isā of Ispahan made his final appearance during the reign of Manṣūr. Though most scholars prefer an earlier dating, based on other sources,<sup>5</sup> *Shahrastānī*'s statement may well reflect another Messianic movement of the period. It was a time of high Messianic hopes, encouraged by the propaganda of the 'Abbāsids themselves. In Persia, the death of Abū Muslim was followed by a series of sectarian revolts, usually with a Messianic colouring. In Syria and Arabia first a Sufyānī claimant and then the 'Alid Muḥammad an-Nafs az-Zakīya led movements of Messianic revolt against the 'Abbāsids, and the latter was proclaimed as Mahdi in Medina. It was probably during the struggle between his supporters and the Caliph that this vision was written.

(6) This passage is expanded from the Secrets, and is derived from Talmudic accounts of the signs of the coming of Messiah. It would appear to be part of the eschatological tail-piece of the immediately preceding apocalypse.

## II

(7-9)<sup>6</sup> "I returned again to my prayer". . . . These words introduce a new vision, hitherto accepted as that of the final author of the Prayer. Jellinek regarded the convulsions referred to in this and the following passages as allusions to the Crusades, and this identification has been generally accepted as certain. The coming of the "sons of the west" with great armies to make war against the "sons of the east", the flight and pursuit to Egypt, the devastation of Palestine, all seem to fit well enough, and Baer<sup>7</sup> has with plausibility identified these last events with the incursions of the Crusaders into Egypt in 1166-7 under Amalric. Following this, he claims to recognize the Third Crusade in § 9 below.

At first sight this identification seems satisfactory enough. Though not everything in the text can be fitted into that particular historical framework, one cannot expect detail and accuracy in what is after all an apocalyptic

<sup>1</sup> A. Marmorstein, "Les Signes du Messie", *RĖJ.*, lii, 1906, pp. 176-186 (cf. Kaufman, p. 294 and p. 311).

<sup>2</sup> Graetz, *Geschichte*, v, 198.

<sup>3</sup> S. Assaf and L. A. Mayer (editors), *Sefer hay-Yishuv*, Jerusalem, 1944, ii, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, pp. 40-1.

<sup>5</sup> Chiefly Qirḡisānī. But for a dissenting view see I. Friedländer, "Jewish Arabic Studies", *JQR.*, n.s. i, 1910-11, pp. 183-215, especially 203 ff.

<sup>6</sup> New paragraph in Jellinek's text.

<sup>7</sup> *Eine jüdische Messiasprophetie*, pp. 162 et seq.

and not an historical narrative. Yet certain questions stand out, to which one would desire an answer. Why is there no indication that the "sons of the west" are Christians? One would expect some reference to "Edom" or "Esau" or one of the usual pseudonyms applied in this literature to Rome and its Christian successors. Why do the Crusaders reach Egypt before Palestine and Alexandria before Cairo—a reversal in both cases of the historic order? Why is the passage concerning the "king of fierce countenance" (§ 8), explained by Baer and Kaufman<sup>1</sup> as general apocalyptic matter with possible reference to the persecution of the Almohades, inserted, apparently quite irrelevantly, between the campaigns of Amalric and the Third Crusade? And, finally, why does the unmistakable account of the First Crusade (recognized by Baer<sup>2</sup> and Kaufman<sup>3</sup> as such) come *after* the Third Crusade and just before the eschatological conclusion?

All these difficulties can be, and indeed have been, explained away as due either to apocalyptic vagueness or textual corruption; and indeed this answer might have been acceptable, had there not been another set of historical circumstances that fit our text far more closely, and with far less need for emendation or rearrangement.

When Jellinek and his successors read in our text of armies from the West that would invade the East, they fell into an error from which their subsequent errors all derived. The West, they assumed, could only be Christian Europe, the East the world of Islam, and the invaders necessarily the Crusaders. But to regard the confrontation of Christendom and Islam as one of West and East is a European practice, and a comparatively modern one at that. Medieval Islamic society, stretching to the Atlantic shores of Morocco and Spain, did not conceive the lands of Christendom as "the West", but rather, where it classified them geographically, as the North, and this could hardly be otherwise. Yet the term West—Arabic *Maghrib*, Hebrew *Ma'rabh*—was used generally of a certain region—of North Africa and sometimes Spain. It is there, rather than in Europe, that we must seek for the origin of the "sons of the west" of our text. And the answer is not difficult to find. In 969 the Fāṭimid armies from Tunisia invaded and conquered Egypt, and followed up their victory by advancing into Palestine. In the light of these events and their sequel, our text becomes clear and consistent. The Ikhshidid withdrawal eastwards to Alexandria, the victory of the Fāṭimids by that city and their victorious advance on Fustāt (= Egypt), and their subsequent invasion of Palestine under Jawhar are all clearly recognizable in our text. The "king of fierce countenance" who rules for three and a half years is the Carmathians, who ravaged south Syria and Palestine in 971–4. By expropriating the rich and abolishing festivals in favour of a religious interconfessionalism, they would be carrying out, if not the real tenets of their sect, at least those attributed to them by contemporary opinion. The passage that follows mirrors the confused and multipartite struggle in Palestine between the Fāṭimids, the Carmathians, the

<sup>1</sup> *Mid. G.*, p. 277.<sup>2</sup> *Eine jüd. Mess.*, p. 165.<sup>3</sup> *Mid. G.*, pp. 281 et seq.

Turkish general Alptakin, and the Palestinian Ṭayyī Bedouin under Ibn al-Jarrāḥ.<sup>1</sup> The incursion of the Edomites that follows would be the campaigns in Syria and Palestine of the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskēs in 974–6.<sup>2</sup> It is this last event that probably caused the writing of this apocalypse. Since ancient times a Roman victory in Palestine was regarded as one of the necessary signs of the coming of Messiah. The Babylonian Hai Gaon (d. 1038), for example, in a Responsum on the coming of Messiah, states this quite clearly and remarks: “Therefore, when we see Edom prevail in the land of Israel, we believe that our salvation has begun”.<sup>3</sup> When the author of this tenth century apocalypse saw the unresisted advance of the Byzantines through Syria towards Palestine, following on the conquest of Egypt and the clash in Palestine of Fāṭimids and Carmathians—both of them incidentally conducting Messianic propaganda on their own accounts—he believed that the end was approaching. His conviction of imminent salvation and parts of his eschatological conclusion survive even in the re-edited version that the final author of the Prayer incorporated in his own text.

Echoes of these events, and in some cases even of the apocalypse on which our text is based, may be found in other works. The Midrash of the Ten Kings does not end, like the Secrets, with the reign of Maṣṣūr, but adds a further paragraph that is clearly related to our text:—

“ . . . the sons of the west will come against the sons of the east to destroy and ruin them, and the survivors will flee and they will pass into Palestine and all of it will be in their hands. And the kingdom of the sons of the west will hold firm in Egypt and from the Nile until the Euphrates.

And after all this, if Israel is not deserving, a king of fierce countenance will arise and kill the king of the sons of the east in the month of Ābh, and make decrees against Israel and abrogate the festivals and sabbaths, as it is said: ‘and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time’ (Daniel vii, 25). ‘Time’ is a year, ‘times’ is two years, and ‘half a time’ is half a year.

Then a king will arise whose name is Mwshyb,<sup>4</sup> and he will restore all who worship idols and be angry against the holy covenant. He will rule for 9 months.”

The Ten Kings then goes straight on to the descent of Satan and his mating with the statue in Rome.

Again, in the *Midrash Leqah Ṭōbh* of Ṭōbhīyah b. Eli’ezer (twelfth-thirteenth century),<sup>5</sup> we find a passage, certainly based on earlier texts, on the

<sup>1</sup> The chief contemporary source for these events is Thābit ibn Sinān, of whom I am now preparing an edition. Other main sources are Ibn al-Qalānisi (pp. 1–21); Ibn al-Aṭhīr, viii, 452–3, 469–472, 483–5; Maqrizi, *Itti’āz*, ed. Bunz, Leipzig, 1909, pp. 100 and 130 et seq. Cf. De Goeje, *Mémoire sur les Carmathes* . . . Leiden, 1886, pp. 187–195.

<sup>2</sup> v. G. Schlumberger, *L’Épopée Byzantine*, Paris, 1896, i, 280–308.

<sup>3</sup> Text in Kaufman, p. 135. On corresponding Christian beliefs cf. A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, Madison, 1928, i, p. 290.

<sup>4</sup> מושיב.

<sup>5</sup> Text in Jellinek, iii, p. 141 (cf. Kaufman, pp. 102–3).

coming of Messiah, and containing the following: "And the sons of the west will wax proud and will seize the kingdom peaceably (cf. Daniel xi, 21). They will come to Egypt and take all captive. And in those days the king of fierce countenance will arise over a poor and impoverished people, and he will 'obtain the kingdom by flatteries' (Daniel xi, 21). And of that time, Isaiah said: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, etc.' (Isaiah xxvi, 20). The sages said: 'Rabbi Hiyya commanded his generation: When you hear that the king of fierce countenance has arisen, do not dwell there, for he decrees that whoever says: "One is the God of the Hebrews" will be killed. And he says: "Let us all be one language and one nation", and he abrogates seasons and festivals and Sabbaths and New Moons and abrogates the Law from Israel, as it is said: 'and he thinks to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and a half a time'. 'Time' is a year, 'times' is two, and 'half a time' is half a year. They said to him: "Master, whither shall we escape?" and he answered them: "to Upper Galilee, as it is said: 'for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape' (Joel ii, 32), and 'in Mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy' (Obadiah 17)".

The text then relates how Israel gather in Upper Galilee and then follow the Messiah ben-Joseph to Jerusalem.

These two passages are certainly related to our text, and probably to the tenth century apocalypse on which the final author of the Prayer drew. The second contains one or two details not in the Prayer text, but easily applicable to the Carmathians, and probably deriving from the lost original. The disappearance of the allusions to the Tzimisces campaign from the later versions is not surprising; later writers, no longer acquainted with these events, would take them as part of the final wars of Messiah, and incorporate them into their own eschatologies.

There are also other, more distant echoes. In a Messianic text of uncertain date and provenance,<sup>1</sup> we find among the signs of the end: "A king of fierce countenance will arise and issue evil decrees in his kingdom, and a great king will go out against Alexandria with an army. There will be great evil in the world and for three and a half years he will rule and rebel. And the princes of Edom will fall and there will be ten wars and then Israel will triumph, etc." A further search in medieval Hebrew literature would no doubt reveal other parallels. At the same time it is significant that discussions of the coming of Messiah written before the tenth century—e.g. Sa'diya's chapter on Redemption, the apocalypses of Elijah and Zerubabel—do not refer either to the three and a half year interlude of interconfessionalism or to the conquest of Egypt from North Africa.

One other possible parallel may be noted, in a text which, though probably unrelated to ours, may well reflect the same events. The Judaeo-Persian

<sup>1</sup> Text in Jellinek, iii, p. 71. He suggests (p. xix) a Persian origin, in the Gaonic period.

apocalypse of Daniel,<sup>1</sup> after describing a series of rulers apparently ending with Ma'mūn, gives an account of the final wars, introduced by two rulers of the west and a king of the Romans. The first king of the west orders the wearing of white garments, and abolishes the black. The second also imposes white garments, makes war on the rulers of both east and west, and wreaks great destruction. The king of the Romans wears red garments, and fights against the children of Ishmael "as far as Damascus".<sup>2</sup> The wearing of white garments was generally recognized in 'Abbāsīd Persia as a symbol of revolt against the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, and the "two kings" may well be the Fāṭimids and Carmathians. The king of the Romans who reaches Damascus would then be the Emperor John Tzimiskēs. His red garments may be an allusion to the imperial purple, or perhaps a pun on Edom (*Adom* = red), introduced to complete the colouring matter. A less likely explanation is that they are an allusion to the alleged Armenian origin of Tzimiskēs' name.<sup>3</sup>

The following points of detail may be noted :

(7) "The sons of the East that are *in their land*" —the *Ikhshīdīd* garrisons in the western desert. This significant phrase accords ill with the Crusades identification, and is accordingly dismissed by Kaufman as a corruption.

"If you put meat in the fire, etc." Presumably a proverb meaning here that while such great convulsions are taking place, Israel cannot hope to escape unscathed. The words that follow advise the Jews to avoid becoming involved, as far as they can.

"They shall pass through Palestine, etc." The Fāṭimīd armies invade and conquer Palestine.

(8) "Three and a half years". In *Dhu'l-Qa'da* 360/Aug.-Sept. 971, the Carmathians under Ḥusain b. Aḥmad b. Bahrām captured Damascus, and proceeded to invade Palestine and Egypt. After a bitter struggle they were defeated and expelled in 363/973-4 by the Fāṭimīd forces who temporarily occupied Damascus. Carmathian bands again played some part in the disturbance of 364-5/974-6.<sup>4</sup>

I know of no evidence from any other sources of particular anti-Jewish measures by the Carmathians, and it seems likely that the author is here referring to the general suffering of the people of Syria during the Carmathian

<sup>1</sup> Published by H. Zotenberg, "Geschichte Daniels", *Archiv für Wissenschaftliche Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, i, 1867-9, pp. 385-427.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 412-13.

<sup>3</sup> From an Armenian word meaning red shoes. See Schlumberger, *L'Épopée*, p. 4, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> The "King of fierce countenance" may even be a direct allusion to the word Carmathian, one possible etymology of which is from *Qarmata*, to frown or wrinkle the face. Cf. Lewis, *The Origins of Ismā'īlism*, Cambridge, 1940, pp. 82-3. I am indebted to Dr. D. S. Rice for this suggestion.

ravages, and possibly to a Carmathian appeal to men of all faiths to join them.<sup>1</sup>

“To upper Galilee”—the gathering of Israel in Galilee on the eve of their redemption is a recurring theme in Jewish apocalypses.

“In his day there will be strife, etc.” A reference to the confused struggle in Palestine between Fātimids, Carmathians, Jarrāhids, Byzantines, Turks, etc.

“And they shall be given into his hand, etc.” This verse is a favourite with “calculators of the end”, i.e., those who attempt to calculate the date of the coming of Messiah by the manipulation of Biblical verses.

“Then a king will arise, etc.” Presumably Mu‘izz, who ends the Carmathian terror and restores order. “Unbelief” is of course an ironic reference to Mu‘izz’s own religion. The “three months” probably refer to the brief interval of Fātimid authority in Damascus and Palestine between the expulsion of the Carmathians and the coming of Alptakin. In the Ten Kings version (v. *supra*) the restorer rules for nine months.

(9) “The plain of Acre”. This struggle was not unnaturally identified by Baer and Kaufman with the battles around Acre during the Third Crusade. But it is unnecessary to find any specific event for this phrase. A battle in the plain of Acre is a recurring theme in Jewish apocalypse, and occurs as early as the poem “On that Day”, now generally believed to have been written in the period of the Arab conquests—

“Edom and Ishmael will fight in the plain of Acre  
Till the horses sink in the blood and panic”.<sup>2</sup>

According to Tzimisces himself, in his letter to the Armenian king Ashut III,<sup>3</sup> he and his army went southward from Damascus towards the lake of Galilee, and received the submission of Tiberias and then of Nazareth. He appointed officers to Beisān, Genesareth, and Acre, the Muslim rulers of which made submission, and marched to the coast at Caesarea, which he captured. The Byzantines then marched northward and occupied Beirūt after a fierce resistance by the Fātimid garrison.

“Assyrians will come upon them, etc.” Assyrians are required by the prophecies. They were conveniently to hand. Towards the end of 974, a party of some 300 Turkish Mamlūks arrived at Damascus from Iraq, whence they had fled as the result of an internal conflict in the Būyid camp. The Damascenes,

<sup>1</sup> The text of such an appeal of later date is preserved in the *Risālat as-Safar ilā’s-Sāda*, a Druze letter to the Carmathians of Bahrain, written in 1058 (MS. Paris, Arabe, 1424, ff. 172-3).

<sup>2</sup> *Sefer hay-Yishshūbh*, ii, p. 70; Kaufman, pp. 154-160.

<sup>3</sup> In *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, Documents Arméniens, i, 13-20.

weary of the depredations of the Fātimid troops, invited Alptakin, the Turkish commander, to take over control of the city and restore order. He did.<sup>1</sup>

"Ships shall come, etc." The Byzantine forces, probably with naval support, occupied or invested several of the coastal fortresses, and "broke the clay" of Arab resistance in pieces. The children of Israel would have had good reason to flee before a Byzantine advance.

"The vale of Megiddo". This battle may be part of the vision of the end, or may alternatively refer to a Byzantine set-back on the eve of their departure. On the participation of Israel, it will be remembered that Jews like Ya'qūb b. Killis were prominent in the Fātimid camp, and in 371/981 we have a reference to a Fātimid force in Palestine commanded by the Jew Manasseh.<sup>2</sup>

"They shall afflict the Assyrians, etc." Probably a reference to the Byzantine campaigns in Mesopotamia.

"The sons of Asshur will go forth, etc." A complimentary account of the extension of Alptakin's authority after the departure of the Byzantines. Israel here is probably an error for Ishmael, and refers to the Palestinian Bedouin to whom, under the Jarrāhids, "the kingdom" almost did return at this time.

"The sons of Italy" This reference forms the only serious objection to the identification submitted. If the rest is correct, this is probably a textual corruption, due to the misguided correction of an unfamiliar to a familiar name by a later copyist. The word in Jellinek's text is תַּיָּא (Tayya). Could this have been תַּיָּא (Tayya)—a common name for the Arabs in Syriac and late Hebrew, and in addition the name of the dominant Arab tribe in Palestine at the time?

"And at once, etc." The remainder of this section contains the remnants of the Messianic portion of the tenth century apocalypse, probably edited by the final author. The material is of familiar type, and has many parallels in other apocalyptic works. The story of the rejection of a king of the seed of David and the resulting conflict may reflect an abortive Messianic movement of the time.

### III

(10) "I returned to prayer, etc." This phrase again introduces a new vision, this time that of the final author of the Prayer. His vivid description of the advance of the Crusaders and their capture of Jerusalem, to which he also refers in his introduction, heralds his vision of the end. Every line suggests the horror of a contemporary witness, and his hopes of imminent redemption.

"They will come to Jerusalem, etc." It is by no means unlikely that Jews

<sup>1</sup> Thābit ibn Sinān, anno 364 A.D.; Ibn al-Athīr, viii, 483.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-Qalānisi, p. 25.

fleeing from the advance of the Crusaders sought refuge in Jerusalem. Jewish participation in the defence of Palestine against the Crusaders is attested by Albert of Aix,<sup>1</sup> who tells how the Jews of Haifa "in moenibus armis exsurgentes, multum in defensione obstiterunt . . . Judaei cives, commixtis Saracenorum turmis, sine dilatione viriliter resistentes, a turri oleum, picem ferventem, ignem et stuppas opposuerunt. . ."

"The tribes have come". The steady decay of Fāṭimid power during the eleventh century favoured the resurgence of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Arab tribes of Syria and Palestine, many of which were able to create independent principalities in various parts of the country. The Ṭayy group in the south had for long challenged Fāṭimid authority in Palestine, and the anarchy in the Muslim world in this period gave them new opportunities.

#### IV

(11) The remainder contains of the final author's vision of the end. Its personalities and events are familiar from Jewish apocalyptic literature generally. Baer and Kaufman have attempted to find a historical foundation for the first paragraph. They see Saladin in the "king of Egypt" who kills in Tiberias and Damascus and Ascalon, and identify the Nehemiah of the text with the pseudo-Messiah David Alroy. The difficulties in the way of such an identification are considerable. There is no evidence whatever of any connection between Saladin and Alroy, and it is by no means certain that their careers were even contemporary. Moreover, Alroy operated in the east, far from these events. Again, the list of cities conquered does not tally with Saladin's campaigns. On the whole it seems far more likely that the Nehemiah ben Hūshīel of our text, like the Antichrist Armilus, is an apocalyptic figure, borrowed, along with his trappings, from earlier visions. The historical background of the paragraph would then probably be a Jewish Messianic movement of the period of the First Crusade. So portentous an event, accompanied by such sufferings for Israel, could hardly fail to revive Messianic speculation among the Jews, and we have several indications of Messianic movements at this time among the Jews in Europe, Byzantium, and Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Historia Hierosolymitana*, vii, chapters 22 and 25. Cf. *Sefer hay-Yiehshehūbh*, ii, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> See Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, pp. 77-8, where several references are given.





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## 12

# THE LEGENDARY FUTŪḤ LITERATURE

Rudi Paret

Muḥammad's establishment and consolidation of the city state in Medina and the Arab-Islamic conquests achieved under the first Caliphs are among the truly significant events in history. We may be certain that contemporaries were already aware of this: the Prophet himself, the first Caliphs and the emirs and warriors who contributed to the success of the campaigns within Arabia and the conquests beyond its boundaries. However, the actual actors in these gigantic events did not yet have any cause, and most likely no opportunity either, to consider them from a literary point of view. They made history, but did not write about it.<sup>1</sup> Information about the *maghāzī*, Muḥammad's campaigns, and the *futūḥ*, the Arab-Islamic conquests, were collected systematically and evaluated for historical representation only by following generations. Of the many monographs written about the *maghāzī*, the best known is by al-Wāqidī, because it was not only used and copied by later historians but because it has come down to us in its original form. In 1882 Julius Wellhausen published an abridged German edition, entitled 'Muhammed in Medina. Das ist Vakidi's Kitab alMaghazi', and since 1966 we have had the complete Arabic text in Marsden Jones's edition. Some books about the *futūḥ* are also attributed to this same Wāqidī (who came from Medina, but spent the last thirty years of his life in Baghdād, where he died in 823). According to Fuat Sezgin the Istanbul manuscripts of these *futūḥ* books are 'apparently genuine'. However, he also says that 'even so, the authenticity of all surviving Wāqidī manuscripts concerning *futūḥ* must be examined thoroughly'.<sup>2</sup> However that may be, the books *Futūḥ al-Shām*, *Futūḥ al-ʿIrāq*, *Futūḥ Miṣr* and *Futūḥ Ifriqīya*, which exist in printed form and some of which are extensive, were in reality not composed by this author but must be designated later, legendary accounts, expanded with fictional material, of the Arab-[736]Islamic conquests. Wāqidī was a historian who reported matter-of-factly and who was particularly interested in dating and chronology of the

<sup>1</sup> This should be accepted as a general statement, despite Fuat Sezgin's references to the early date of written tradition (*Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* I, Leiden 1967, p. 251-6).

<sup>2</sup> *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* I, p. 296, n.1.

military events he reported.<sup>3</sup> According to Ibn 'Asākir, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, he systematically interrogated the descendants of those contemporaries of Muḥammad's who had taken part in the wars concerning the exact details of the events, and personally went to visit al-Muraysī, Ḥunayn and other battle sites in order to see them for himself.<sup>4</sup> If one reads only a few pages in one of the printed *futūḥ*-books allegedly written by Wāqidī, one will quickly come to the conclusion that it cannot have been composed by an author using such strictly scholarly methods. In a word, just as we must distinguish between historical and legendary accounts of the *maghāzī*, so we must distinguish between historical and legendary traditions about Arab-Islamic conquests. I have studied the legendary *maghāzī* literature in great detail in a monograph published in 1930. In the following I will state a few points concerning the legendary *futūḥ* literature, points which will be of a provisional nature. The result of my study, which I can summarise in few sentences towards the end of this hour, is also no more than a temporary attempt at finding an answer to the question asked in the subject, namely 'The legendary *futūḥ* literature – an Arab national epic?' If we wanted to arrive at a valid answer, we would first have to carry out several intricate and time-consuming individual studies.

In their early days, European Oriental Studies did not recognise correctly the legendary nature of the abovementioned *futūḥ* literature; for this we can adduce two reasons. Firstly, the historical accounts of the conquests became known comparatively late, such as Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-buldān* in de Goeje's edition in 1863–6, and the relevant passages in Ṭabarī's *Annals* in the Leiden edition (First Part IV.V, 1890.1893). Secondly, the legendary *futūḥ* works do in fact contain a wealth of historical material, be it chronological, topographical or quite generally factual, as they were not free inventions, but, so to speak, were developed out of the historical *futūḥ* works. Within the field of *futūḥ* literature, they consequently correspond to the type of writing I called 'fiction with historical background' in my monograph about the legendary *maghāzī* literature, and contrasted clearly against the 'fiction without historical background'. While no reliable sources were extant, or immediately available, scholars had to be glad to be able to glean information about the history of the conquests from books which today must be counted as legendary *futūḥ* books.

[737] As early as the beginning of the 18th century Simon Ockley, Professor of Arabic in Cambridge, presented the conquest of Syria based on a manuscript of Wāqidī's *Futūḥ al-Shām* in the first volume of his history of the Saracens (1708). Incidentally, Ockley's historical work was translated into

<sup>3</sup> Wellhausen, *Muhammed in Medina*, p.15ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* I, p.6 (in the editor's Arabic introduction, with references).

Dutch in 1741, into German in 1746 and into French in 1748, a sign of its wide popular appeal. In 1825 H. A. Hamaker edited the Arabic text of the conquest of Lower Egypt, with a multitude of learned notes;<sup>5</sup> in 1827 Heinrich Ewald published his edition of a fragment of the *Conquest of Mesopotamia*.<sup>6</sup> In 1847 B. G. Niebuhr translated the Arabic 'History of the Conquest of Mesopotamia and Armenia by Mohammed ben Omar el Wakedī'; it was edited, with explanatory notes and additions, by A. D. Mordtmann and published in Hamburg. In 1854–62 W. Nassau Lees's edition of the *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Shām* followed in the Bibliotheca Indica.<sup>7</sup> Criticism of the authenticity of the texts and the reliability of the tradition began early as well. Hamaker's and Lees's editions already indicate in the title that the original is only attributed to Wāqidī; in his 1860 Akademie dissertation D. B. Haneberg from the outset only speaks of 'Pseudo-Wakidi's' History of the Conquest of Syria and states that it is unlikely that the work was composed before the Crusades.<sup>8</sup> The most detailed criticism was M. J. de Goeje's, directed at a book also called *Futūḥ al-Shām*, edited by W. N. Lees in 1854, but attributed not to Wāqidī but to a certain Abū Ismā'īl Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Azdī al-Baṣrī.<sup>9</sup> Finally it must be mentioned that Leone Caetani also voices criticism of the information in the *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Shām* in several passages of his monumental work *Annali dell'Islam*.<sup>10</sup>

The main interest of the historians listed in the previous paragraph, who expressed criticism of the *futūḥ* literature, is in reconstructing the history of the conquests. The more historical or topographical information the text provides, the more [738] faithfully it appears to document what really happened, the more highly it will be rated. On the other hand, explicitly fictitious and embroidered episodes as well as 'works of rhetorical and stylistic art'<sup>11</sup> will be considered as worthless trimmings, or even rejected as interpolation. However, it would be possible to use a radically different

<sup>5</sup> Henricus Arentius Hamaker, *Incerti auctoris liber de expugnatione Memphidis et Alexandriae, vulgo adscriptus Abou Mohammedi Omari filio, Wakidaeo, Medinensi* (Leiden 1825).

<sup>6</sup> G. H. A. Ewald, *Libri Wakedii de Mesopotamiae expugnatae historia pars* (Göttingen 1827).

<sup>7</sup> *The Conquest of Syria, commonly ascribed to Abou 'Abd Allah Mohammad b. 'Omar al-Wāqidī*, Edited with notes by W. Nassau Lees (three volumes, Calcutta 1854–62). This edition only contains the history of the conquest of Syria. The text ends with volume II, p.22 of the Cairo edition (1343/1925) used by me.

<sup>8</sup> P.5.

<sup>9</sup> *Mémoires sur le Fotouho's-Scham attribué à Abou Ismaïl al-Bācri* (Leiden 1864 = *Mémoires d'Histoire et de Géographie Orientales* par M. J. de Goeje, n.2).

<sup>10</sup> See note 17 below.

<sup>11</sup> Niebuhr–Mordtmann, p.V.

measure, and take the text as a whole, without exceptions, trying to comprehend its formal literary elements and its overall tendency. Haneberg concludes his critical discussion of Pseudo-Wakidi's history of the conquest of Syria with a statement to this effect, which will also be the starting point for our own deliberations and which I will consequently quote, with certain abridgements, verbatim: 'All things considered, we do find that, if we wish to appreciate the work properly according to the author's apparent bias, we must not regard it from the historical or the geographical side only. What appears to us as detracting addition is exactly what to him was undeniably the main thing, namely the romantic scenes the work contains, and the theological effects it aims at. In the first respect it might have been one, or indeed the, Arab epic poem if the author had submitted himself to the shackles of metre and rhyme. With the greatness of events and the diversity of the actors it would not have to take second place behind any other heroic epic: the emperor Heraklius is the Priam, Khālid the Achilles of this Iliad. It is the equal of medieval sagas because knightly humour is not lacking either: it appears personified in the character of the incomparable hero Dāmis, with the epithet 'the Father of Terror' ... The unity within this manifold variety is provided by the glorification of Islam, which is present in all forms. The author uses every opportunity to show the merits of Islam, the signs and mission of the Prophet as well as the lives of the first followers of Islam in the most dazzling light. He is more familiar with the customs of Christianity than most Muslim authors known to us ... If it was indeed his intention, as seems probable to us, to raise the Muslims' enthusiasm in the face of the successes of the crusades, his work is well composed.'<sup>12</sup>

For my part I shall now attempt a closer characterisation of the legendary *futūḥ* literature in all its iridescence, precisely as fiction with a historical background. My basis is a two-volume quarto printed in Cairo in 1343/1925; the author's name is given as Wāqidī. The title is throughout *Futūḥ al-Shām*, although it does not describe the conquest of Syria only but also (in the second volume) the conquest of Lower Egypt, Mesopotamia and Armenia, the conquest of Iraq and, at the very end, of Bahnasā and the rest of Upper Egypt.

[739] The first question to be clarified is whether these different parts really belong together and form a literary unity, or whether they have been joined only superficially. I should like to answer this very briefly in the following way: that on the whole it is permissible to speak of unity. The emphasis is on reporting about the conquest of Syria (and the geographical term Syria is used to include Palestine). The history of the conquest of Lower

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<sup>12</sup> Haneberg, p.38–40.

Egypt, Mesopotamia and Armenia follows organically. According to Pseudo-Wāqidī, not only Khālīd, 'the sword of God', was immediately involved in all these military enterprises, but also the former Byzantine commander of Aleppo, named Yūqannā. The latter was a Christian who converted to Islam and now, adorned with the characteristics of a fictional hero, campaigned with great ardour for the further spread of Islam. Of course, the conquest of Iraq, and later Persia, also forms part of this whole story. However, compared to Syria, these two are mentioned only in passing, ending (in the two-volume edition I am using) rather abruptly. Only the conquest of Bahnasā has its own character, in that it appears to be connected to the feast of a saint (*mawlid*), during which Bahnasā honoured (and possibly still does) all those Muslims who died a martyr's death in the Holy War of conquest and are said to have been buried just there.<sup>13</sup> However, as regards the way in which it is presented, the conquest of Bahnasā and other places in Upper Egypt fits harmoniously into the whole history, and the general is once again Khālīd ibn al-Walīd. Finally it should be mentioned, only in passing, that there is also a legendary *Kitāb Futūḥ Ifrīqiya* which is also attributed to al-Wāqidī. I am using a two-volume edition published in Tunis in 1966.

More important than the question of the unity of the text and the connection between its individual components is the question of its age. However, at the moment it would be premature to discuss it, as we must first characterise the contents and the form of presentation in more detail. Maybe we will obtain certain criteria to help us determine the date at which the text was composed. If I already consider the *isnāds*, the chains of transmitters that are part of the text and [740] are meant to, as it were, guarantee that the respective information about events has been handed down reliably from one authority to the next and thus certainly originated in times long past, I do so with a specific reason. I am not concerned with a chronological problem, but with a structural one: not with determining the point in time to which a text can be traced back, but with proving a formal element which, as we shall see, plays an essential part in determining the literary character of the legendary

<sup>13</sup> The story of the conquest of Bahnasā is usually transmitted as an independent account. It survives in many manuscripts and has been printed a number of times and is attributed to several authors. See C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur* I, p.136, Supplement I, p.208; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* I, p.296. 1909 a French translation appeared in Cairo from the estate of Emile Galtier, but without any of the literary and historical evaluation planned by the translator, which should have followed in a second volume (Emile Galtier, *Foutouḥ al-Bahnsā*. Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, Tome XXII). 'Alī Bāṣā Mubārak's (d.1893) *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiya al-jadīda* contains a short reference to the anniversary (*mawlid*), in honour of the 'martyrs' who fell in Bahnasā at that time (Vol. X, Būlaq 1305, p.4, l.26f.)

*futūḥ* literature. My observations are, this must be repeated, provisional in character. When studying the entire history, I only marked the passages with remarkable isnāds; completeness was only aspired to in the section concerning Lower Egypt. Furthermore, I had to take a fairly summary approach to the evaluation of the material collected in this way if I did not intend to spend weeks on individual threads of biblio- and biographical research. This made the results of Hamaker's and Nassau Lees's studies of several isnāds all the more welcome.

The situation is confusing, to say the least. On the one hand the great majority of the authorities cited in the isnāds – their number ranges from two to nine – cannot (or not yet) be identified. This also applies to the six transmitters who are mentioned each in different passages as experts in the field of *futūḥ* tradition.<sup>14</sup> In the section on the conquest of Lower Egypt, on the other hand, we cannot find any one of the authorities cited by Ibn 'Abdalḥakam in his *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-l-Maghrib*, or those named by Fuat Sezgin in the relevant section of his *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (I, p.354f.). The sources mentioned in the *futūḥ* book itself thus appear to be of rather doubtful value. However, we must bear in mind (Nassau Lees was the first to point this out) that some of the links in the collective isnād which prefaces the whole book correspond (despite certain divergences) to the collective isnād at the beginning of Wāqidi's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*.<sup>15</sup> The author or the transmitter

<sup>14</sup> 'Abdallāh ibn Sulaymān al-Dīnawarī (I, 173; Lees III, 23); 'Abdarraḥmān al-Māzinī (I, 188; Lees III, 63f.; Nu'aym ibn 'Abdarraḥmān al-Madanī); Munāzil (Ibn Nazzāl) al-Ṣaydalānī (I, 204; Lees III, 106); Jarīr bn al-Bakkā' (II, 18; Lees III, 187; Jarīḥ (Jurayj?) ibn al-Bakkā'); Ibn Jarīr (II, 57); the grandfather of a certain Nu'aym (II, 124).

<sup>15</sup> They are the following parallels:

a) *Maghāzī*: 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Abdarraḥmān ibn Sa'īd ibn Yarbū' al-Makhzūmī wa-Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥārith al-Taymī wa-Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Muslim;

*Lees*: 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Abdarraḥmān ibn Sa'īd ibn Yarbū' al-Makhzūmī wa-Nawfal ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥārith al-Tamīmī wa-Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Maysara ibn Ru'aym (?);

*Cairo edition*: (Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Sufyān ibn) Nawfal ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tamīmī wa-Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Anṣārī;

b) *Maghāzī*: wa-Sa'īd ibn 'Uthmān ibn 'Abdarraḥmān ibn 'Abdallāh al-Taymī wa-Yūnus ibn Muḥammad al-Zafarī wa-Ā'idh ibn Yaḥyā wa-Muḥammad ibn 'Amr wa-Mu'ādh ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī ... wa-'Abdarraḥmān ibn 'Abdal'azīz ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf;

*Lees*: wa-Rabī'a ibn 'Uthmān wa-Yūnus ibn Muḥammad al-Muẓaffarī wa-Ā'in ibn Yaḥyā ibn 'Abdallāh al-Darqī (?) wa-Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāfi' wa-Mu'ādh ibn Muḥammad al-Anṣārī wa-'Abdarraḥmān ibn 'Abdal'azīz ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Uthmān ibn Jubayr al-Ḥārithī;

*Cairo edition*: all these names are missing.

did definitely not just [741] pick all the names of authorities out of the air. A somehow credible impression is also created when there are a few references which mention that the transmitter Yūnus ibn ‘Abd al-A‘lā (d. 877) had a tradition ‘read’ to him (with the aim of giving him the licence to transmit it onwards: the technical term is *qirā’atan ‘alayh*). This is said to have happened once in Kufa (I, 58 = Lees II, 3), another time in Ashkelon (II, 22 = Hamaker, 3), also in Ramla in the year 220 AH = 835 AD (II, 61 = Niebuhr, 1: 28 AH = 649 AD!), and finally in Jerusalem, but the year given here would date the event to 26 years after the death of the transmitter (Rabī I 290 = 903 AD; II, 133). It seems permissible to assume that the chains of transmitters used in the *Futūḥ al-Shām* were substantiated by source material which has now been lost or not yet been studied in sufficient detail, and that at least a part of the isnāds still indicates these sources, although the names have been corrupted and confused.<sup>16</sup> However that may be, [742] one thing is sure (and that is what is important to me in the present context): the legendary *futūḥ* literature pretends to have scholarly character. It claims to be historical literature, in the narrowest sense of the term. Proof of this are the numerous isnāds which are used throughout the text to introduce smaller and larger sections.

What, though, is the actual content of the *futūḥ* literature? What is the tendency behind it? And to what extent should it be called legendary?

There is one instance (I, 125, repeated 165; Lees III, 1f.) in which the author expresses himself concerning the intention and aims of his work. After emphasising the truthfulness of his account, he continues: ‘It was my

c) *Maghāzī*: wa-Mālik ibn Abī-l-Rijāl wa-Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Uqba;

*Lees*: wa-Mālik ibn Abī-l-Ḥasan wa-Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Utba (read: ‘Uqba?) mawlā al-Zubayr;

*Cairo edition*: wa-Mālik ibn Abī-l-Ḥasan wa-Ismā‘īl mawlā al-Zubayr.

<sup>16</sup> A remarkable source is quoted in the history of the conquest of Egypt (II, 27; Hamaker, 18f.). The text is partly corrupt; also the two versions differ in several passages. One isnād mentions in fifth place (third, in Hamaker) a certain Abū (or Ibn) Ishāq al-Umawī. He is stated to be the main authority (*al-mu‘tamad ‘alayh*) in the history of the conquest of Egypt, the land of the Rab‘a and Persia (or: the Persians). According to ‘Umar (‘Amr) ibn Ḥaṣṣ, no-one except him (Muḥammad ibn Ishāq) specialised in the history of the conquest of Syria and Egypt, as all the other biographers concentrated on the battles and the conquest of Iraq and on what passed between Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās and Kisrā Anūshirwān. According to him, Ibn Ishāq received all his information from reliable authorities of the Makhzūm whom he met after the conquest in Ramla; namely from Nawfal ibn Sājīr (Musāji‘) al-Makhzūmī, nephew of Khālid ibn al-Walīd. He was one of the *mu‘ammārūn* who was present at the battles of Tabūk and later (earlier) Ḥudaybiya and also on the day of al-Yamāma and Musaylima; together with ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ he took part in the whole conquest of Egypt (and Syria). Another named authority is Fahd ibn ‘Āṣim ibn ‘Amr ibn Saḥl (Suḥayl) ibn ‘Amr al-Makhzūmī; others are just as reliable and all took part in the conquest of Egypt.



intention to present clearly the excellent qualities of the Companions of God's Messenger and their endeavour in the Holy War (*jihādahum*), in order to teach a lesson to (*ḥattā uraghghima*) the apostates who reject custom and law ... For if it had not been for those Companions of God's Messenger – thanks to God's will – the country would not have become Muslim, and the knowledge of this faith would not have spread. What fine men they were! They were striving for God's sake as they should, and helped his faith to victory! When they met the enemy, they stood their ground and feared no exertion. They fought for their faith until unbelief had been toppled off its throne and finally surrendered.'

Indeed, the whole book is one great paean to the Arab warriors of the time of the conquest and praise for their bravery and religious zeal. The bravery and fighting strength of the Muslims is exaggerated into fantasy. They are always in the minority, but console themselves with the frequently quoted verse from the Koran 'How many a little band of men has overcome a large one with God's permission! God is with them that are patient,' (2:249). When 'Umar asked Abū 'Ubayda to send 4000 horsemen to help 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ in Egypt, Abū 'Ubayda was worried about the long distance, whereupon Khālīd suggested he should begin by sending four Muslims. These could take the place of the 4000 horsemen (II, 38). In another context we read that sixty Muslims fought against 60,000 enemies, and after the victory only ten of the Muslims had fallen, as opposed to 5,000 on the opposing side (I, 113f.). However modest the Muslims may have been in their attitude towards one another, they are very aware of their worth: when they visit the enemy camp as emissaries, they refuse to alight from their horses and hand in their swords (I, 6; II, 33). The Arabs [743] never commit treason or lie (I, 58.88); when they make a promise their word can be relied on. This is how it was in their heathen days, and all the more so after they found the path to the true faith (I, 48). Among themselves they are agreeable, imbued with a sense of justice and generally a paragon of virtues. Above all, however, they are pious and their minds are on the afterlife. Their Christian opponents are exactly the opposite, which is why they are doomed from the very beginning. I must confine myself to recounting two instances.

A spy of the Christian king Māhān, who has been hanging about the Muslim camp unrecognised for a whole day, and has become thoughtful, reports: 'I am coming from people who fast during the day and pray during the night; who command what is right and forbid what is wrong. In the night they are monks, during the day, lions. If any one of them, and be it their highest, were to steal, they would cut (his hand) off; if he were to commit fornication, they would stone him ... Their emir is just like the weakest among them, but they obey him ... Their wish is to fight, their desire to go to battle, their resolve

to die in battle as martyrs. They have so far refrained from battle with you so that if you attack them, you shall be in the wrong,' (I, 132). In another passage the Byzantine emperor Heradius asks why the Arabs were so victorious, and a wise old priest answers him: 'Because our people have confused their religion and forsaken their faith, and do not want to obey Jesus Christ, son of Mary, anymore, and are doing each other wrong. There are none among them who command what is right and forbid what is wrong, none that practise justice and do good. They neglect showing obedience to God, do not observe the times for prayer, they practise usury and fornication. They are all recalcitrant and vile. These Arabs, on the other hand, are obedient to God and follow the rules of their religion. At night they are monks, during the day they fast. Their minds are on their Lord God at all times and they speak the blessing on their Prophet. Among them there is neither injustice nor violence, and they do not let pride arise among themselves. Their watchword is truth, their garment, the worship of God. If they attack us, they do not yield; if we attack them, they will not turn their back. They have seen that this world is a home that will pass; the next world a home that will last.' (I, 103)

These two passages are typical of the way in which the *futūḥ* literature accentuates. It paints primitive black-and-white pictures. All that is good is attributed to one's own party, all that is bad, to the enemy, and the theological and apologetic keynote can be heard throughout. Descriptions of more or less entertaining details run parallel: episodes of conversions to Islam, of dissimulation and stratagems, of Muslim women who take part actively in the battle, of miracles, magical statues and inscriptions and much more. [744] We also occasionally find wise sayings of old masters as well as theological contemplations and excursions. It is impossible to give even a selection from this colourful medley in such a short paper, to say nothing of listing the passages that use motifs from traditions the core of which can be found in historical writings. I can, however, say a few things about the *form* of the presentation.

As regards language, the legendary *futūḥ* literature is on a high level. It is written in flowing, pleasant High Arabic which only infrequently changes to a more factual and austere tone, for instance when an isnād is inserted or a military event dated exactly, as it would be in a work of history. The narrative of an episode is often livened up by changing from a factual, third-person introduction to the first-person account of events narrated by an (alleged) eye witness. Instances of this transition between external narrative and internal narrative can also be found in historical writings; but it was in the *futūḥ* literature that the first-person narrative became a literary topos. Now and again, the speeches and accounts are interspersed with descriptive similes.

Very frequently, indeed nearly throughout, we find the author using the stylistic device of Arabic rhyming prose (Arabic *sajʿ*). Short sections made up out of few words and with similar structures will receive the same end rhyme and then be joined together. In shorter passages of rhyming prose one single rhyme will end the sections; in longer passages the rhyme can change once or more frequently. This stylistic device is often used in the description of battles, but also in many other instances – whenever the narrative needs to be raised to rhetorical pathos. Lyrical interludes are also used, although less frequently than rhyming prose. They are lyrical and thus subjective, as opposed to the more factual, ‘epic’ nature of the *sajʿ*. In my monograph about the legendary *maghāzī* literature I have attempted to differentiate between these two stylistic devices, rhyming prose and lyrical interlude, and to determine more closely their respective literary functions (pp.163–7). It is not necessary to repeat here what I have already said there, but a remark of a fundamental nature is required in the present context. I will express it with reservation, as my purely personal opinion, and I am speaking, as it were, in the ‘unreality’ or ‘potential’ mode, as I am not proposing for discussion a fact but merely a theoretical possibility.

In the passage quoted above, Haneberg expresses the opinion that ‘in the first respect it might have been one, or indeed the, Arab epic poem if the author had submitted himself to the shackles of metre and rhyme’. I would beg to differ. In my opinion whether or not a work of literature may be called an epic poem should not be dependent on whether it is composed throughout in a uniform metre. [745] An Arabic epic poem, which made use of the stylistic forms of prose and rhyming prose in a sensible interchange and in addition contained lyrical interludes to loosen and accentuate its internal structure was – purely theoretically, as I have already said – thinkable. These stylistic devices particularly suited to Arabic would serve to satisfy the highest artistic demands. If despite all this an Arab national epic was not composed, it is hardly because authors refused to ‘submit themselves to the shackles of metre and rhyme’.

Thus we have really reached the essence of the problem under discussion. But before the end of the hour, when I shall summarise the result of my thoughts and attempt to find an answer to the question expressed in the title ‘The legendary *futūḥ* literature – an Arab national epic?’, I must briefly discuss the time at which this literature took shape.

It is not necessary once again to give reasons why the book entitled *Futūḥ al-Shām*, which is attributed to Wāqidī, cannot have been composed by Wāqidī in the form in which we have it now. Hamaker, Haneberg, de Goeje and Caetani have expressed sufficient criticism. The opinion which appears to

have prevailed generally is that the book originated in the time of the Crusades.<sup>17</sup> Brockelmann is more cautious in his *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* and writes 'many *futūḥ* books have been attributed to Wāqidī and were disseminated in particular during the Crusades in order to inspire the warriors for the faith' (I, p.136, 2nd edition, p.142). I should like to endorse this wording. A legendary, idealising representation does not necessarily have to originate in later times. It may date back to a comparatively early time and have run parallel to a more scientific historical representation. We only have to remember the account of Sayf b. 'Umar, which Caetani, incidentally, correctly considers to be a precursor of the Pseudo-Wāqidī.<sup>18</sup> Sayf died during Harūn al-Rashīd's reign, at least two decades before the historian Wāqidī. Furthermore, we must not overestimate the effect the Crusades had on the Muslim contemporaries. For the Muslims in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Mesopotamia, until the beginning of the Crusades the most dangerous enemies were the Byzantine Christians, and Byzantine Christians are the people we find so obstinately resisting the Arab Islamic conquerors in the descriptions in the *futūḥ* literature. Thus it is indeed possible that the legendary *futūḥ* literature took shape in the [746] ninth, tenth or eleventh century, or evolved from the historical *futūḥ* literature. This statement does not, however, intend to doubt that the *futūḥ* literature with its anti-Christian bias drew new strength from the Crusades, starting in the twelfth century, and thus gained more popularity and effectiveness throughout the populace. In that context, new passages inspired by current events may have been grafted onto the text. It is in fact the case that we should imagine the development of the *futūḥ* literature as a process taking some time, during which several strands of traditions ran parallel. If one really wanted to attempt more detailed study in this field, one would be well advised to investigate the individual stages in the development of this literature and, insofar as that is possible, differentiate between them.<sup>19</sup> This will probably lead to better results than an attempt to date the whole composition in one particular century, or even decade, and to discover the identity of the author.

<sup>17</sup> Hamaker, S.X; Haneberg, S.5-7, 39f.; M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoire sur le Fotouho's-Scham attribué à Abou Ismaïl al-Bācri*, Leiden 1864, p.38f.; Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* II, 1, p.568 (AH 11, para.80, n.1); II, 2, p.1159 (AH 12, para.362, n.1).

<sup>18</sup> Concerning Sayf b. 'Umar see J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams* (Skizzen und Vorarbeiten, Sechstes Heft) Berlin 1899, p.1-160; Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* II, 1, p.568 (AH 11, para.80, n.1).

<sup>19</sup> One interesting point is that in the *futūḥ* text edited by W. Nassau Lees, which is attributed to a certain Abū Ismā'īl al-Baṣrī, the exceedingly legendary person that is the renegade Yūqannā of Aleppo is not mentioned even with a single word (p.124), while he plays an important role in Pseudo-Wāqidī (Cairo, I, p.166f.; Lees III, p.4ff.).

I am now reaching the conclusion of my paper. Is it, then, possible to call the legendary *futūḥ* literature an Arab national epic poem? After careful weighing of the evidence, the answer to this question must be in the negative.

It is true that some things speak in favour of a positive answer. The subject matter – the Arab-Islamic conquests – appears to suggest the idea of an epic poem as a matter of course. It was during the reigns of the first Caliphs that the Arabs lived through their heroic age. The bravery of the generation of conquerors, their enthusiasm and sense of religious mission inspired later generations again and again, down to our own time. The achievements of that generation of pioneers were seen as a mirror of each later generation's own strength, even if the reflection and the reality did not actually correspond; in fact, even more so in that case. In addition to this there are the possibilities of stylistic expression. As I have pointed out in a different context, an Arabic epic poem, which made use of the stylistic forms of prose and rhyming prose in a sensible interchange and in addition contained lyrical interludes to loosen and accentuate its internal structure was – purely theoretically, as I have already said – thinkable.

But subject matter and stylistic devices alone are not sufficient for producing a literary work of art. What is needed above all is the genius of an artist, and that was lacking. The Arab world did not produce a Firdausi. The men of letters who devoted themselves to *futūḥ* literature and tried to create a form in which it was appetising and palatable for the populace, [747] were – let us say it bluntly – small minds. In their black-and-white painting they represented a primitive way of life, too primitive to be great; straight and unbroken, but precisely because of this without internal tension. There is no trace of anything remotely like tragedy in the representation.<sup>20</sup> Everything happens at surface level only; the lacking depth is compensated for by quantity and hypertrophy.

And there is something else. The author or transmitter did not even have the intention of using the history of Arab Islamic conquests simply as subject matter to create a literary masterpiece. He did make use of the stylistic devices offered by contemporary Arabic literature, in particular rhyming prose, in order to address his readers, or more exactly listeners, with as much effect as possible and awake in them enthusiasm for events of a heroic past. In this respect, artistic intentions were present. However, the author's true desire was to be a historian and taken seriously as such; which is proved by the numerous isnāds found in the text. In these circumstances, the legendary *futūḥ* literature could not evolve into an epic poem. It remained bound up with

<sup>20</sup> See R. Paret, 'Das Tragische in der arabischen Literatur' (Zeitschrift für Semiotik 6, 1928, p.247–52; 7 1929, p.17–28).

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historiography and thus became – as a literary type – a kind of hermaphrodite. It is neither fish nor fowl: on the one hand pseudo-history hoping to be genuine history, on the other hand literature that cannot perceive itself as such and has consequently never moved beyond the beginnings of its own literary genre.

I shall conclude with this mostly negative observation. I dare not inquire into the deeper reasons for this faulty development – if I may say so. Saying that the literary genre of epic poem is simply not suited to Arabic seems to me to be too facile a theory. What we might possibly say is that the study of history and tradition in the Arab-Islamic world is too predominant to allow the evolution of a separate and independent national Arab epic.



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# ON THE RELATIONSHIP IN THE CALIPHATE BETWEEN CENTRAL POWER AND THE PROVINCES: THE 'ŞULĤ'- 'ANWA' TRADITIONS FOR EGYPT AND IRAQ

*Albrecht Noth*

The numerous early Islamic traditions that discuss the subject of law and administration in newly conquered provinces can – roughly – be divided into two groups:

1. Those that are, or purport to be, objective reports about events and conditions; accounts of treaties with conquered peoples come especially to mind.
2. Those that relate opinions, theories and claims.

One particular body of traditions stands out most noticeably from this second group, namely those which discuss in the most varied ways the question of whether certain conquests were peaceful, by treaty (*şulĥan*), or 'by force' (*'anwatan*).

These '*şulĥan*'–'*'anwatan*' traditions – these are the terms by which we shall refer to them – have not been studied in their entirety;<sup>1</sup> a more detailed

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the necessity of selecting the traditions according to their subject matter from the various historical compilations of the early times and study those together which treat of the same subject, cf. A. Noth, "Isfahan–Nihawand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie", in: *ZDMG* 118 (1968), p.274ff., esp. p.295f.; cf. also id., *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischen Geschichtsüberlieferung*, in: *Bonner Orientalistische Studien* 25 (1973), p.10ff.

So far, *şulĥan*–'*'anwatan*' traditions have been referred to in the following studies on early Islamic administrative history:

- M. v. Berchem, *La propriété territoriale et l'impôt foncier sous les premiers Califes* (1886);
- C.H. Becker, *Beiträge zur Geschichte Ägyptens unter dem Islam*, Fascicle II (Strasbourg 1903), p.81ff.;
- Poliak, "Classification of Lands in Islamic Law and its Technical Terms", in: *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 57 (1940), p.60ff.;
- F. Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation in the classic Period* (Copenhagen 1950);
- D.C. Dennett, *Conversion and Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge 1950);
- A. Fattal, *Le statut légal des Non-Musulmans en pays d'Islam* (Beirut 1958).



study might, however, [151] contribute to a better understanding of early Islamic administrative history. The present article is an attempt at analysing them by means of source criticism, and to categorise them historically.

While the exact meaning of ‘*ṣulḥan*’ is usually quite clear in the ‘*ṣulḥan*’–‘*anwatan*’ traditions, it is frequently difficult to understand exactly what ‘*anwatan*’ means. Let us therefore begin by clarifying this term.

If there is a mention of ‘*anwatan*’, it is important to distinguish whether this is merely a description of the manner of conquest of places or cities, or whether it is used as a classification from which legal consequences will be drawn. In the former case, the term denotes quite literally the invasion by force of a city or fortification, the consequences of which might be, at most, pillaging and enslaving the population and defending forces.<sup>2</sup> After this kind of ‘*anwatan*’, a treaty (*ṣulḥ*)<sup>3</sup> was still perfectly possible, as the fact that generally fortresses did not surrender voluntarily but had to be conquered by force was no obstacle to a *ṣulḥ*.<sup>4</sup> In a case such as this ‘*anwatan*’ and ‘*ṣulḥan*’ were not opposites at all. This is certainly the original, concrete meaning of ‘*anwatan*’, which is devoid of legal distinctions, and which may safely be assumed to be referred to when a place is said to have been conquered ‘*anwatan*’ as such.<sup>5</sup>

Conquered ‘*anwatan*’ undoubtedly assumes a different meaning when it is used to classify whole countries, such as especially Egypt<sup>6</sup> [152] and the Sawād (Iraq),<sup>7</sup> but also Syria,<sup>8</sup> Jazīra (Mesopotamia),<sup>9</sup> Urdunn (Transjordan),<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Sayf b. ‘Umar in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (ed. de Goeje) I/2565, 13ff; Anon. in Ṭabarī I/2696, 6ff.; Anon. in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (ed. De Goeje, Leiden 1866) p.246, 20ff.; ‘Aṭā’ al-Khurāsānī *ibid.* 381, 22ff.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the first two quotations from the previous note, ; al-Ḥajjāj b. Abī Manī’ in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p.176, 20f.; Wāqidi *ibid.*, p.326, 10ff.; al-Walid b. Hishām and ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mughīra in Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Tārīkh* (ed. Akram Diyā’ al-‘Umarī, Najaf 1967), p.114, 12f.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Wāqidi in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p.176, 14ff.; Anon. *ibid.*, p.203, 9ff.; Anon. *ibid.*, p.212, 7f.; Anon. *ibid.*, p.318, 1f.; local traditionists *ibid.*, p.326, 1.f.; al-Kalbī *ibid.*, p.333, 18; Anon. *ibid.*, p.376, 18; Ibn al-Kalbī in Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Tārīkh* p.95, 2ff.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Ḥāritha b. Muḍarrib in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2387, 5f.; Madā’inī (?) *ibid.*, 2887, 1; Anon. in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.312, 4f.; *ibid.* p.382, 12f.; Anon. *ibid.* 387, 11; Anon. *ibid.* p.391, 9ff. (repeatedly).

<sup>6</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-akhbārūhā* (ed. Torrey, New Haven 1922), pp.84–90 (several traditions).

<sup>7</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2372–75 (several traditions).

<sup>8</sup> Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.151, 20f.

<sup>9</sup> Sayf with collective isnad in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2507, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Haytham b. ‘Adī in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.115, 16f.; Ya’qūbī, *Tārīkh* II (Beirut 1960), p.140, 22.

Kūhistān<sup>11</sup> and the Maghrib.<sup>12</sup> It is safe to assume that the meaning was simply 'subjected without treaty'; it is irrelevant whether there was fighting or not. In general, it means peaceful non-treaty conquest, as will become clear from the following examples:

In traditions concerning the conquest of the Jazīra we find statements to the effect that cities and towns in this area were conquered 'sulḥan', the countryside (*arḍ*), on the other hand, "anwatan".<sup>13</sup> However, we do know that there was most certainly no fighting over the open country in Mesopotamia; it would have passed more or less automatically into the hands of the conquerors. It will have to suffice to refer only to comparable traditions concerning the conquest of other areas.<sup>14</sup>

There is general agreement concerning the "anwatan" conquest (with few 'sulḥ' exceptions) of the Sawād, and in the discussion about its status we find the phrase: 'The people of the Sawād have no treaty (*'ahd*), they surrendered, leaving the decision (to the victors) (*nazalū 'alā-l-ḥukm*)'.<sup>15</sup> Nor do we know anything about battles with the country population in the Sawād. Finally, in the 'sulḥan'—'anwatan' traditions concerning Egypt, the stereotypical comment on "anwatan" is 'without treaty or contract' (*bi-ghayr 'ahd wa-lā 'aqd*).<sup>16</sup>

Our conjectures from historical sources we find confirmed in grammatical commentaries: Ibn Sikkīt (d. 858)<sup>17</sup> explains the word "anwa" in verses by Kuthayyir as meaning 'obedience, voluntary action' (*ṭaw'*); in this meaning it was used by the inhabitants of [153] the Hijāz.<sup>18</sup> In *Lisān al-'Arab* we read, 'conquering something "anwatan" could also mean 'by surrender (*taslīm*) and submission (*ṭā'a*) on the part of the adversary',<sup>19</sup> i.e. by voluntary submission, without a fight.

Thus the pair 'sulḥan'—'anwatan' is probably correctly rendered as 'conquered with/ without a treaty'.

<sup>11</sup> Anon. in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.403, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Wāqidī in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.222, 6f.

<sup>13</sup> Wāqidī in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.175, 5ff; Ḥatīm b. Muslim in Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh* p.110, 3ff., 10, 21.

<sup>14</sup> 'Abd Allḥ b. al-Mughīra in Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh* p.94, 14ff. (countryside belonging to Damascus); Khalifa's father *ibid.* p.105, 9ff.; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* (ed. Sachau) Vol. V p.32, 23ff. (Merv and the surrounding countryside).

<sup>15</sup> Yaḥyā b. 'Ādam in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.266, 20ff.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Ibn Lahī'a in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.217, 16; 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ziyād in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.88, 16f.; Yazḍ b. Abī Ḥabīb in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.216, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *El* (2nd ed.) Vol.III, s.v.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* (ed. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig 1866ff.) Vol.IV p.538, 5ff., s.v. 'mushrif'.

<sup>19</sup> Reprint, Beirut 1955/56 Vol.15 c.101b, s.v. '-n-w.

The ‘*ṣulḥan*’–‘*anwatan*’ traditions are – and this is important to know when assessing them – obviously secondary, i.e. they do not represent problems and discussions that concerned the *futūḥ* fighters themselves. Not only do the opinions on whether a region came under Muslim dominion ‘*ṣulḥan*’ or ‘*anwatan*’ diverge,<sup>20</sup> but the traditions – especially those concerning the Sawād – frequently assume the form of legal opinions (whether on request or out of personal interest) by *later* men of law.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore they present themselves – and this is particularly the case for those traditions referring to Egypt – as critical discussions of primary *futūḥ* reports, usually traditions concerning treaties.<sup>22</sup>

Secondary, yes, but into which historical context do they belong? The answer will be established by determining what actually came under Muslim dominion ‘without a treaty’: this was, as is clear from the traditions concerning the conquest of Jazīra and Sawād quoted above,<sup>23</sup> the entire agricultural land, as treaties had been entered into only with cities, towns and fortified settlements.

Consequently the question of ‘*ṣulḥan*’–‘*anwatan*’ can only have evolved during the second stage of integrating the conquered provinces into the Islamic state, at the time when the Muslims had gradually taken control of existing administrative institutions, [154] which made discussion of the legal status of agricultural land relevant.

This assumption is confirmed most impressively by a tradition surviving in Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, stating that Ziyād b. Abīhi, Mu‘āwiya’s governor in Iraq (665–673) endeavoured during his rule to separate ‘*ṣulḥ*’ lands from ‘*anwa*’ lands.<sup>24</sup>

Having thus determined the historical preconditions for the emergence of the ‘*ṣulḥan*’–‘*anwatan*’ problem in a general way, we must ask next which aspect of the problem our traditions are concerned with in particular, and whether it is possible to glean more detailed information from their contents as to what was the cause, purpose and time of their origin.

As we have already said, the ‘*ṣulḥan*’–‘*anwatan*’ traditions concentrate in particular on Egypt and the Sawād (Iraq); this is likely to be connected to the fact that these two provinces were the most important agricultural land with by far the highest yield of all the Islamic empire.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. in Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh* p.106, 10 and 17.

<sup>21</sup> In Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2367ff. and 2467ff. and repeatedly.

<sup>22</sup> In Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.84ff., esp. 88ff.

<sup>23</sup> See p.152 above and notes [14 and 15].

<sup>24</sup> Al-Walid b. Hishām–Maslama b. Muḥārīb–Qaḥdham in Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh* p.107, 1f.

The traditions referring to Egypt and those referring to Sawād must be discussed separately for, as we shall see, they differ substantially. Let us begin with the Egyptian traditions.

All these traditions have the purpose of claiming "anwatan" conquest in the case of Egypt and of refuting claims to the contrary. This endeavour becomes all the more understandable when we consider the primary traditions, most of which are certainly authentic, on the subject of the conquest of Egypt. The treaties entered into by the first conquerors in Egypt laid down a poll tax of two dinars, and the provision of food for the Muslim warriors.<sup>25</sup> These and similar conditions were very much dependent on the individual situation,<sup>26</sup> and the tax agreed is unlikely to have been in any way proportional to the possible yield of the rich agricultural country Egypt. Thus correcting this state of affairs appeared advisable, especially when we consider the legal consequences that could result from "anwatan" conquests; in the main the following:

- [155] - Right of ownership in "anwatan" lands passes to the Muslim community (it becomes 'fai'); the yield can be used to benefit Islam.<sup>27</sup>
- Taxation on "anwatan" lands is in the hands of the respective ruling power.<sup>28</sup>
- The inhabitants of "anwatan" lands have the status of slaves.<sup>29</sup>

Claiming "anwatan" conquest to have taken place in Egypt thus implied that the Muslims had practically unlimited control over this country.

Now we are in a position to categorise the "anwatan" classification of Egypt, and the claims linked to it, historically quite exactly, as a number of Egyptian "anwatan" traditions are traced back to the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (717–720).<sup>30</sup> This establishes with certainty the correct *terminus ante quem non* for the creation of these traditions, while attributions to 'Amr b.

<sup>25</sup> Instances in Dennett, *Conversion and Poll Tax*, p.70ff.

<sup>26</sup> Concerning this topic there will be more detailed information elsewhere.

<sup>27</sup> Mujāhid b. Jabr (?) in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.266, 6ff.; Mālik b. Anas in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.155, 9ff.; Rabī'a b. Abī 'Abd al-Raḥmān *ibid.* p.89, 9ff.

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Ishāq–Al-Qāsim b. Quzmān in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2584, 1ff.; Wāqidī in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.217, 21f. (indirectly); Mūsā b. Ayyūb and others in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.83, 1ff.; Al-Ḥasan b. Thawbān *ibid.* p.154, 2ff.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Ishāq–Al-Qāsim b. Quzmān in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2584, 2f.; Ibn Lahī'a in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.217, 9ff.; *id.* in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.89, 19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Lahī'a in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.217, 15f.; *id.* in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.89, 17ff.; *id.* *ibid.* p.90, 4ff.; 'Ubayd Allāh b. Abī Ja'far *ibid.* p.90, 7ff.; Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb *ibid.* p.90, 11f.; Yaḥyā b. Ayyūb *ibid.* p.90, 13f.

al-ʿĀṣ, the conqueror of Egypt, to eyewitnesses of the conquest, and to the Caliph ʿUmar I, should be seen as backdatings with the purpose of providing more convincing proof. It is unlikely that we will have to go much further than the reign of ʿUmar II for purposes of dating. Thus an Egyptian authority of Ibn Ishāq's explains Egypt's classification as "*anwatan*" by means of the endeavour of the Umayyad rulers (until 750) to raise taxes at will in that country.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, some traditions on the subject of "*anwatan*" which are linked with ʿUmar II are also transmitted from ʿUbayd Allāh b. Abī Jaʿfar (d. between 752 and 754),<sup>32</sup> an Umayyad client, and from the Egyptian Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (d. [156] 745/6).<sup>33</sup> Consequently we can assume these traditions to have originated in the time between 717 and ca. 740.

Allocating our traditions to a concrete historical event, however, can be only hypothetical, although they may indeed belong in the time of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz. In that case their aim was to justify the measure introduced by him that the living had to pay taxes for the dead, i.e. collective responsibility for a fixed amount of taxes, in order that the total tax yield in Egypt should remain constant.<sup>34</sup> Maybe they are linked to ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ḥabīb's tax reform which, whether it was justified or not,<sup>35</sup> was felt to be so unjust that 725/6 saw the first great Copt uprising.<sup>36</sup>

However that may be, one thing is clear not only from Ibn Ishāq's tradition quoted above – that the Umayyad Caliphs had an interest in the Egyptian "*anwatan*" theory<sup>37</sup> – and from frequent mentioning of the Caliph ʿUmar II, but also, and in particular from the substance of the Egyptian "*anwatan*" traditions: these traditions did indeed have the purpose of buttressing fiscal demands or measures of the later Umayyad Caliphs.

The nature of the '*ṣulḥan*'–'*anwatan*' traditions concerning Iraq is completely different from that of the Egyptian traditions; in fact it is possible to say – *cum grano salis* – that they amount to the exact opposite. In the case of Egypt the aim is to deny the treaties entered into by the first conquerors, which certainly did take place. The traditions referring to Iraq, on the other hand, attempt to transform the universally known and recognised subjection of the country without treaties ("*anwatan*") into a treaty-like Muslim

<sup>31</sup> In Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2584, 1ff.; with isnad *ibid.* 2581, 1.

<sup>32</sup> In Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.90, 6; for his vita see Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Ṭabaqāt* p.259, 19f. and Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt* VII (2) p.202, 13ff.

<sup>33</sup> In Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.90, 11; for his vita see Torrey's introduction to Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam p.6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Lahī'a in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.89, 17ff.; cf. Becker, *Beiträge* II p.105f.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Becker, *Beiträge* II 107ff.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* p.116.

<sup>37</sup> See p.155 above and n.[31].

assumption of power. The only exceptions mentioned are [157] the actual treaties, with Ḥira and others, entered into during the first campaign in Iraq near the Euphrates, which we know to be true.

The argument in most of the Iraqi traditions runs as follows: While Iraq (Sawād) was conquered '*anwatan*', afterwards the previous owners of the land were asked to pay a tax (in most cases *jizya* and *jizā*') in return for protection, and they agreed to do this.<sup>38</sup> The aim of the traditions is now to present this arrangement with the original land owners, which did not involve a treaty, as equivalent to an actual treaty. Thus some instances use the word '*sulh*' (treaty) to refer to asking the inhabitants (to pay tax).<sup>39</sup> The following line of argumentation – quite obviously apologetic – is even clearer: The account of the call to pay *dhimma* and *jizā*' is followed by the remark that there was a precedent involving the Prophet, in e.g. Dūmat al-Jandal. Khālīd had conquered Dūmat '*anwatan*', and the governor had even been taken prisoner, but despite all this, people were asked to pay *dhimma* and *jizā*'. After two further examples from the Prophet's days follows the final ruling: 'He who transmits anything but the deeds of the just imams and the Muslims will have called these liars and reviled them'.<sup>40</sup> This is obviously a polemic in the name of the Prophet against people who were of the opinion that in the case of a conquest without treaty there was no chance of a later agreement to pay *dhimma* and *jizā*', i.e. a treaty-like settlement.

The Kufan legal scholar al-Sha'bī is even more blunt. When consulted with reference to the people of Sawād, he replied: 'They had no treaty; but once there had been an agreement for them to pay tax (*kharāj*), they received a treaty (*ṣāra lahum 'ahd*').<sup>41</sup> The latter is probably not to be understood in the concrete sense [158] of a written document but is likely to mean: '(Because of the agreement) they had something which was equivalent to a written treaty.' Sayf b. 'Umar's authorities express very similar opinions.<sup>42</sup>

It is our task to ask for the reason why there was such a clear endeavour to argue away the '*anwatan*' character of the Sawād. As we know,<sup>43</sup> among the legal consequences of '*anwatan*' conquest of a country was that the ownership of the land passed to the Muslims as a whole and that the status of the previous

<sup>38</sup> Sha'bī in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2372, 7ff.; Māhān *ibid.* 2372, 13ff.; Ḥasan al-Baṣrī *ibid.* 2373, 2ff.; Sha'bī *ibid.* 2373, 5ff.; Sa'īd b. Jubayr *ibid.* 2375, 13ff.; Māhān *ibid.* 2468, 12ff.; Sha'bī *ibid.* 2471, 14ff.

<sup>39</sup> Sayf with collective isnad in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2371, 8; Sha'bī *ibid.* 2372, 10; Māhān *ibid.* 2372, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Muḥammad b. Shīrīn in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2373, 11ff.

<sup>41</sup> In Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.267, 2ff.

<sup>42</sup> In Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2371, 7.

<sup>43</sup> See p.155 above.

owners sank to resemble that of slaves. Among our Iraqi traditions, which play down the “*anwatan*” character of the Sawād, we find several instances in which these consequences are openly rejected. Once the Sawād had been conquered “*anwatan*”, there had been an agreement with the land owners to pay tax in return for protection, as a consequence of which they remained in possession of their lands.<sup>44</sup> Sha’bī speaks out against the slave status of the Sawādians: because of the agreement they could not be considered to be slaves.<sup>45</sup>

In order to explain the tendency behind these and similar arguments, we have to look briefly at a set of traditions that is partly linked to the Iraqi ‘*ṣulḥan*’–“*anwatan*” traditions, namely the reports of a planned distribution of conquered lands among the Muslim warriors involved (*qismat al-arāḍīn*).<sup>46</sup>

The content of all these traditions is the same in principle: At the conclusion of the first great *futūḥ* under ‘Umar I the question arose whether the countries conquered without a treaty (“*anwatan*”) – and, characteristically, the countries mentioned are once again in most cases Iraq (Sawād) and Egypt – should not be distributed among the Muslims who had taken part in the [159] campaigns; after all, those countries were really booty. The question of distribution, however, was decided in the negative, usually for the reason that if the land were distributed, only the conquerors (and their descendants) would profit, while later generations of Muslims would be practically destitute.<sup>47</sup> Consequently the agreement reached made the “*anwatan*” lands common property of all Muslims and set them aside to be used to the benefit of them all.

There are, however, formal as well as factual reasons against the authenticity of these *qismat al-arāḍīn* traditions. They are often clothed in the very suspicious form of Caliph’s writings or correspondence.<sup>48</sup> In several

<sup>44</sup> Māhān in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2372, 16f.; Sha’bī *ibid.* 2028, 18.

<sup>45</sup> In Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2373, 5ff.’ cf. Sulaymān b. Yasār in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.266, 10ff.

<sup>46</sup> These are the most important instances in the context: ‘Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ḥamdānī in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 151, 18ff.; an alleged eye witness *ibid.* 214, 2ff. = *ibid.* 218, 6ff = Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* p.88, 4ff.; Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.265, 18ff.; Abū Ishāq al-Ṣabī’ī-Ḥāritha b. Muḍarrib (?) *ibid.* p.266, 12ff.; Ibrāhīm al-Taymī *ibid.* p.268, 16ff. Instances writings of early law scholars: e.g. Yaḥyā b. Ādam, *Kitāb al-kharāj* (ed. Juynboll, Leiden 1896) p.27ff.; Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl* (ed. Cairo, 1353 H) p.58ff.

<sup>47</sup> We also find the argument that there would be quarrels in the case of distributing the land (e.g. in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.266, 18ff.), or that the parcel of land each individual Muslim received would be too small (e.g. *ibid.* p.266, 12ff.).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Noth, “Der Charakter der ersten großen Sammlungen von Nachrichten zur frühen Kalifenzeit”, in: *Der Islam* 47 (1971) p.180ff. and the literature quoted there; also, in more

of them we find the topos 'deliberation of Caliph and people (or Prophet's Companions)'.<sup>49</sup> Not only 'Umar is said to have raised the question of distribution, but also 'Alī;<sup>50</sup> the former can take both a supporting<sup>51</sup> and a rejecting role.<sup>52</sup> The decisions have the character of pointed legal maxims.

Factual objections must be raised against the '*anwatan*' classification, which hardly belongs within the time of the early conquests,<sup>53</sup> and above all against the fact that it is only this particular group of traditions that mentions the intention to distribute the lands, whereas the narrative *futūḥ* tradition does not, as far as I can see, refer to it at all. Finally, the recurrent argument of 'consideration for the descendants' points clearly towards these traditions as having been created in the time of the first or second generation after the conquerors.

There are no doubts, on the other hand, concerning the objective of these traditions – which were probably backdated to the time of the second Caliph in order to make them carry more conviction. [160] If the lands conquered without a treaty were classed as booty belonging to the Muslims, the indigenous population lost every right of ownership. By further asserting that the distribution of the booty, although in itself justified, did not take place because it should be the property of all Muslims and used to the greater good of all, claims of individual Muslims were also refuted: if the land belongs to *everyone*, it does not belong to *anyone*. The control over the land would then be in the hands of the Caliph as the representative of the Muslim community.<sup>54</sup>

It is most likely that the objective of the *qismat al-arāḍīn* was to declare private ownership of the conquered agricultural lands as unlawful and to give the administration into the hands of the central power in the person of the Caliph. Consequently they are based on the same tendency that we saw in the 'sulḥan'–'anwatan' traditions concerning Egypt, discussed above.

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detail, id., *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*, in: *Bonner Orientalistische Studien*, Vol. 25 (1973), Chapter: 'Briefe'.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien* (see n.48) p.124ff.

<sup>50</sup> Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl* p.80.

<sup>51</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Qays al-Ḥamdānī in Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p.151, 18ff.; Abū Ishāq al-Sabī' *ibid.* p.266, 12ff.

<sup>52</sup> In the vast majority of traditions.

<sup>53</sup> See p.153f. above.

<sup>54</sup> Thus explicitly Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl* p.74, 1ff.

<sup>55</sup> Sayf with collective isnād in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2371, 3ff.; Māhān *ibid.* 2372, 17ff.; Sa'īd b. Jubayr *ibid.* 2375, 10ff.; Ibrāhīm al-Nakhā'ī, *ibid.* 2375, 15ff.; Sayf with collective isnād *ibid.* 2468, 1ff.



The legal claims of the Caliph's central power as laid down in the *qismat al-arāḍīn* traditions are rendered invalid by the Iraqi 'ṣulḥan'—'anwatan' traditions in two ways:

1. By proclaiming a near-contractual agreement with the non-Muslim Sawādians and thus denying the 'anwatan position of the Sawād;
2. By claiming that the question of whether the lands should be distributed or not only referred to the Sassanid crown land, and land whose owners had fled, but not to the entire country of the Sawād.<sup>55</sup>

With the first argument the state's claim of ownership as such was disputed, with the second it would be at least much restricted. If, then, the lands of the Sawād (or at any rate the main part of them) were not booty, they remained with their original owners and could be sold and bought – and consequently become Muslim property. It is safe to assume that the aim of the Iraqi 'ṣulḥan'—'anwatan' traditions was to justify Muslim land ownership in Iraq, [161] be it existing or still to be acquired,<sup>56</sup> against differing claims of the central government.

The earliest attempts of the state to use the 'anwatan' claim to assume control of the conquered lands in Iraq date back to the time of Mu'āwiya. This is clear from the report quoted above that Mu'āwiya's governor in Iraq, Ziyād b. Abīhi (665–673), tried to distinguish between 'ṣulḥan' and 'anwatan' lands but, the report goes on, was unable to do so.<sup>57</sup> We must put a slightly later date to the group of 'ṣulḥan'—'anwatan' traditions studied here, as can be deduced from the dates of their last provable transmitters – all of whom, incidentally, came from Kufa and Basra in Iraq:

1. Māhān (Kufa, d. 702/3, executed by Ḥajjāj)<sup>58</sup>
2. Sa'īd b. Jubayr (Kufa, d. between 712 and 714; executed by Ḥajjāj)<sup>59</sup>
3. Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī (Kufa, d. 714/15)<sup>60</sup>
4. 'Āmir al-Sha'bī (Kufa, d. between 721 and 728)<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Concerning the question of Muslim ownership of lands in Iraq cf. Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl* p.83ff.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. p.154 above and n.[24].

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Kitāb tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (ed. Hyderabad, 1325–27 H) Vol. 10 p.25f.; he transmitted Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I, 2372, 13ff.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt* VI, 178ff.; he transmitted Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2375, 8ff.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt* VI, 188ff.; he transmitted Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2375, 13ff.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *EI* (1st edition) Vol.4, col.260a ff.; he transmitted Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2372, 7ff.; *ibid.* 2373, 5ff.; *ibid.* 22471, 14ff.; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* p. 266, 22ff.

5. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (Basra, d. 728)<sup>62</sup>

6. Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (Basra, d. 728).<sup>63</sup>

According to this information, we must assume that our traditions date from the late seventh/early eighth century.

At this time precisely, Ḥajjāj b. Yūsūf was governor of Iraq and the eastern provinces of the Empire (694–714). While it is not really clear to this day which form his trenchant administrative measures took, a clearly recognisable characteristic of his rule is his determination to use every means at his disposal to enforce the claims of the central power represented by him, in particular where fiscal matters were concerned. The Iraqi 'sulḥan'–'anwatan' traditions, [162] which quite obviously deny, or at the least restrict, important claims of the imperial government, may well be a reaction against the centralistic policy of the famous, or better infamous, Iraqi governor. A further point in favour of this assumption is the fact that Māhān, Sa'īd b. Jubayr, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī and 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, the transmitters of the traditions discussed here, were professed opponents of Ḥajjāj.<sup>64</sup>

The question of whether our traditions were aimed specifically at Ḥajjāj or merely generally against the ideas of the Caliph's control over the lands of the Sawād prevalent around the beginning of the eighth century must, however, remain unanswered. What we can say with certainty is this: they show the endeavour of certain circles (probably Muslim landowners in Iraq) to enforce their putative rights by using historical arguments against the opposing – and also based on historical arguments – claims of the imperial government.<sup>65</sup>

To conclude briefly, the 'sulḥan'–'anwatan' traditions concerning Egypt and Iraq are not a product of the time of the conquest, although the majority of them pretends to be, and they must not be used as source material for the conditions of that time. On the contrary, they date from the later Umayyad era and are indicative of a not unimportant aspect of the political situation of that time. The traditions concerning Egypt and the substantially similar *qismat al-arāḍīn* traditions are proof of the attempts of the Caliph's government to assume control of the new provinces which after the conquest were only loosely connected with the central government. That there was opposition, found especially in Iraq, is clear from the Iraqi attitude to 'sulḥ'–'anwa'.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *EI* (1st edition) Vol.2 col.289b f.; he transmitted Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2373, 2ff.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *EI* (1st edition) Vol.3 col.447a f.; he transmitted Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2373, 11ff.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. their biographies, quoted in notes [58 to 61] on p.161 above.

<sup>65</sup> The government theory became the prevalent one in the end. In works by early law scholars contrary opinions are only mentioned marginally. Cf. e.g. Yahyā b. Ādam, *Kitāb al-kharāj* p.27ff. and Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl*.

People were unwilling to have the rights, real or imagined, they had acquired during the *futūḥ*, curtailed by the Caliph's central government.

In order to justify their claims both parties – and this is typical not only for political arguments in the Muslim State in *those* days – used historical, or rather pseudo-historical, arguments.

## IBN ABDELḤAKAM AND THE CONQUEST OF NORTH AFRICA

*Robert Brunschvig*

### A Critical Study

[108] We now have at our disposal a convenient edition – text and annotated translation – of the chapter of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s work which deals with the conquest of North Africa and Spain by the Arabs, and their history until the middle of the eighth century, in other words until the end of the Umayyad dynasty of Damascus. Albert Gateau has reproduced there,<sup>1</sup> with some minor variations,<sup>2</sup> the Arabic text of the *Futūḥ Miṣr* published by Charles C. Torrey in 1922,<sup>3</sup> and, with some light fine-tuning, the French translation which he himself had published in the *Revue Tunisienne* in 1931, 1932 and 1935; the contribution of the *Revue Tunisienne* to the study of this subject deserves acknowledgement. The *Introduction* includes several clear and welcome pages on the sources of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam: this had already appeared, in almost the same form, at the beginning of a study – thereafter somewhat overlong and involved – which Albert Gateau devoted, in the same revue, from 1936 to 1942, to Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, historian of the Muslim West.

In his introduction, A. Gateau rightly underlines, following Torrey, the character of *ḥadīth* – or tradition transmitted in the manner of religious Traditions, with a chain or *isnād* [109] of successive transmitters – which the work presents in numerous parts, especially for the most ancient period, that of the Conquest proper. Here there is, in fact, an assertion which has become commonplace for all of the early stages of Muslim historiography; but it does no harm to repeat it and demonstrate it for a work which remains, on the facts

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Conquete de l’Afrique du Nord et de l’Espagne...* by Albert Gateau, 163 p., Algiers (Carbonel, Bibliotheque arabe-francaise), 1942.

<sup>2</sup> We have no qualms about accepting, with A. Gateau (pp. 79, 155), the reading *Tubruq* for the locality mentioned in the Pentapolis, some distance from Derna. Military events of recent years, which have made the name of “Tobruk” famous, would seem to authorise the use of the latter form.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. Charles C. Torrey, New Haven (Yale Oriental Series, Researches, vol. III), 1922.

of the very highest importance, the most detailed and ancient account that has survived into the present day.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, who died a septuagenarian in 870 or 871, wrote at the time when the great canonical collections of Tradition had finally been put together. He belonged, by origin and by education, to a milieu of well-known Egyptian scholars, of the Mālikite rite, connoisseurs of *ḥadīth*. All of the last section of his *Futūḥ Miṣr*, longer than the pages relating to the conquest of Barbary, is a veritable collection of *ḥadīth*-s, most of them claiming to originate with the Prophet through his Companions who came to Egypt; they concern various subjects and are classed following the name of the reporting Companion. Found here are some of the *ḥadīth*-s which, in sequence, constitute the account of the Conquest: we shall have occasion to return to precisely these texts.

A. Gateau, drawing attention to the names of transmitters most often cited in the chapter on the conquest of North Africa and of Spain, has had no difficulty identifying them with those of western or Medinan traditionists or – this is the greatest number – Egyptians, of the period or the school of Mālik. It emerges from his study, as could moreover be expected *a priori*, that an Ifrīqiyan tradition and a Spanish tradition on the conquest coexisted with an oriental tradition, principally Egyptian, which is the essential source of our author. All three have, in the course of time, undergone interference on certain points which, through the names of certain transmitters, it is sometimes possible to unravel.

That Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam made history as a *muḥaddith*, is thus the evidence, and is the impression at first sight. But there is more. As close examination of the work reveals, it is not only the form or the personality of informers who are seen to be linked to the religious tradition, it is also through [110] judicio-religious concerns and ideas that there is explained, fundamentally, more than a page, of soothing appearance or on the contrary, of strange and unexpected aspect: the remarks which follow aspire before all else to demonstrate this.

## I. – Treaty with Cyrenaica, Conquest of Fezzan

1. – At the end of the chapter translated by A. Gateau (pp. 31, 33), some curious remarks relating to the conquest of Barqa and the Pentapolis, in what is now Cyrenaica, deserve to hold our attention. The conqueror ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ, to whom Islam already owed Egypt, is supposed to have negotiated with the Lawāta Berbers, inhabitants of the Pentapolis, who committed themselves to

paying a *jizya* of thirteen thousand dinars; to meet this obligation they would, if necessary, sell their own children whom they would remain entitled to designate. 'Amr is supposed to have subsequently sent the text of the treaty (*'ahd*) to a governor of the territory, named Ibn Diyās, and he is supposed to have proclaimed these words from the throne: "The inhabitants of the Pentapolis have a treaty of peace which must be scrupulously observed towards them (*Li-ahli Anṭābulusa 'ahdun yūfa lahum bihi*)". Then it is affirmed that in ancient times these people of Barqa, of their own accord, regularly paid the total amount of their *jizya* on a fixed date.

Why this insistence and these surprising details, the only ones supplied to us on this campaign against Barqa?

We may note first that, at an earlier stage in his book, with reference to Egypt, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam had already lent to 'Amr an affirmation with the same meaning, comparing the Copts "with neither contract nor treaty (*mā... 'aqdun wa-lā 'ahdun*)" to the people of the Pentapolis: "The latter have a treaty of peace which must be scrupulously observed towards them".<sup>4</sup> Another historian of the Conquest, only slightly more recent, the Persian of Baghdad al-Balādhurī (d. 892), in speaking of the Copts [111] of Egypt and the capture of Barqa, essentially reproduces the data given above.

He only omits the speech from the throne; but on the other hand he extends to the wives of the Lawāta the dispositions affecting their children, and he adds regarding the legal status of these wives and these children two opinions that are supposed to have been transmitted, one by the traditionist al-Layth, the other by the pious Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz.<sup>5</sup>

And now we turn our attention, in the attempt to uncover the precise signification of these passages, to the ancient collections of *ḥadīth*-s and certain classical works of *fiqh*. We will see if they do not supply us with the key necessary for the understanding of our narrative.

A widespread Tradition relates that the *jizya* was levied by the Prophet on the "Majūs" of Bahrain,<sup>6</sup> and by the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb on those of Fars. One version, which seems to be based on the traditionists of Medina and claims to date back to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, adds that the *jizya* was also levied on the Berbers by the caliph 'Uthmān. This version is encountered in the work

<sup>4</sup> Torrey edition, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> Balādhurī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*, ed. de Goeje, Leiden 1863, pp. 217, 224-5, tr. Hitti, New York 1916, pp. 342, 352-4. The version of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam is also found, in almost identical form, in the work of the 11th century Spanish geographer al-Bakrī, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale*, tr. de Slane, Algiers 1913, p. 14 (the translation needs correcting), and in the work of other authors.

<sup>6</sup> With the variant "Hajar", principal city of Bahrain.

of al-Tirmidhī,<sup>7</sup> (d. 892); but it already exists in the *Kitāb al-Amwāl* by Abū ‘Ubayd b. Sallām,<sup>8</sup> (d. 839) and in the *Muwatta’* of Mālik,<sup>9</sup> (d. 795). According to another Tradition, transmitted under the name of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf, the Prophet would have declared on the subject of the Majūs: “Treat them like the people of the Book”, in other words like the Jews and the Christians, who pay the *jizya*.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore we may consult the Kairouanese *Mudawwana* of Saḥnūn, (d. 854), where the Iman of Medina appears through the medium of his [112] Egyptian disciples. There we read in the book of the holy war (III, 46): “Mālik said on the subject of the Berber Majūs: ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān levied the *jizya* on them.” And we can also learn, through manuals of *Ikhtilāf* or of divergences between the rites, that all the orthodox schools accepted the *jizya* of the pagans classed as “Majūs”, while for the worshippers of idols (*‘abadat al-awthān*) different solutions applied. Ḥanafites and Mālikites accepted it, but not the school of al-Shāfi‘ī. Al-Awzā‘ī, founder of the rite which preceded Mālikism in Spain, declared that all pagans were “Majūs”.<sup>11</sup>

Do these remarks not enable us already to lift a corner of the veil, and would they not suffice to make comprehensible all the doctrinal, as well as practical, interest which was attached, in the view of religious personnel, to the case of the subjugation of non-Arab populations, whether Jews, or Christians, or converts to Islam? As the Islamic conquests were progressively extended, the problem presented itself more broadly and with more variety. It was necessary at an early stage to except from among the pagans, originally considered permanent enemies and in principle doomed to choosing between conversion and death, the “Majūs” or followers of Zoroaster, worshippers of fire. Through a convenient and well-known extension, “Majūs” was applied, as a way of avoiding theoretical discussion, to the pagans with whom there were hopes of concluding agreements.<sup>12</sup> It is in this direction no doubt, and perhaps more precisely in the persistent influence of the rite of al-Awzā‘ī, that it would be appropriate to search for the reason why, in an astonishing manner at first sight, the “Norman” pirates of the Middle Ages were called

<sup>7</sup> Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, with commentary by Ibn al-‘Arabī, ed. Cairo 1350/1931, vol. VII, p. 86, reading given in note 1.

<sup>8</sup> Abū ‘Ubayd b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, ed. Cairo 1353 H., pp. 32–34.

<sup>9</sup> Mālik, *Muwatta’*, with commentary by al-Bājī, ed. Cairo 1331 H., II, 172–3.

<sup>10</sup> With, however, according to the commentaries and even some extensions to the text of the *ḥadīth*, certain restrictions, especially with reference to diet and *connubium*.

<sup>11</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, tr. Fagnan, Paris 1921, p. 101; Ṭabarī, *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahā’* ed. Schacht, Leiden 1933, pp. 199–203; Dimashqī, *Raḥmat al-Umma fī khtilāf al-a’imma*, ed. Cairo, undated, p. 306. See also Ibn Rushd, *Muqaddimāt*, ed. Cairo, 1325 H., I, 285.

<sup>12</sup> Buchner, *EI* (first ed.), art. *Madjūs*.

“Majūs” in Arabic; since the time of their first appearance on the coasts of Spain in 844, there had been peace negotiations between them and the emir of Cordova.<sup>13</sup> Were our Lawāta [113] of the Pentapolis, for the *fuqahā* at the end of the eighth century and for the duration of the ninth, not a useful example of “Majūs”, accepted as dealing with the Muslims, a precedent, genuine or fictitious, which could be conveniently highlighted and invoked?

However, we are justified in pressing on, thanks in the first place to four passages of Abū 'Ubayd b. Sallām. We may recall that Ibn Sallām, born in Herat to an emancipated Byzantine father, died in Mecca at around the age of sixty-five, in 839, some thirty years before Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam. He could have met the latter, still young, in Egypt, a country which he visited, we are told, in 828; he did, in any case, hear the traditionist 'Uthmān b. Ṣāliḥ there, the most frequently cited direct source of the *Futūḥ Miṣr*.<sup>14</sup> He is cited himself as a source by al-Balādhurī, specifically on the subject of the Berbers of Barqa. His doctrinal sympathies accorded in general, it is said, with the rites of Mālik and of al-Shāfi'ī; but our assertion is that he was capable, when the occasion required, of distancing himself from them. His *Kitāb al-Amwāl* recalls quite closely, in subject and in genre, the *Kitāb al-Kharāj* of the great Ḥanafite master Abū Yūsuf and – from further afield – that of Yaḥya b. Adam, which could have served him partially as a model. It is, after the manner of the *Muwaṭṭa'* and the ancient books of *fiqh*, a collection of *ḥadīth*-s classed according to subject, among which from time to time the author expresses opinions of his own.

A) The first of the four passages of the *Kitāb al-Amwāl* which interest us confirms, in terms identical to those used by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, and with a very similar *isnād*, the declaration of 'Amr b. al-Āṣ comparing the Copts of Egypt, who have no contract, with the inhabitants of the Pentapolis: “The latter have a peace treaty which must be scrupulously observed towards them” (p. 135). Ibn Sallām inserts this *ḥadīth* in a chapter where the enslavement of people subjugated “by force” is discussed.

<sup>13</sup> Lévi-Provencal, *EI* (first ed.) art. *Madjūs*. A doubt is however raised by the same author in *Byzantion*, 1937, p. 15; but it concerns a later diplomatic mission rather than immediate negotiations. See, similarly, on the “small islands of Majūs who, in the end were obliged to submit and thus, so it seems, saved their lives,” *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, vol. I, Cairo 1944, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> See the *Introduction* to *K. al-Amwāl*, and Ben Cheneb, *Classes des savants de l'Ifrīqiya*, Algiers 1920, p. 203, n. 1. Since the *K. al-Amwāl* several times mentions 'Uthmān b. Ṣāliḥ, this book must date from the last ten years of Ibn Sallām, from 829 to 839.



B) The second passage occurs in another chapter where there is a statement of the conditions to be imposed on peoples who submit [114] “by treaty” and retain their religion (p. 146). The following is a translation:

“‘Abd Allāh b. Šālīḥ tells us, according to al-Layth b. Sa‘d, according to Suhayl b. ‘Uqayl, according to ‘Abd Allāh b. Hubayra al-Sibā‘ī: ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ concluded a treaty of peace with the inhabitants of the Pentapolis – which is part of the territory of Barqa, between Ifrikiya and Egypt – in exchange for the payment of the *jizya*, on the condition that they would sell such of their children as they wished to discharge this *jizya*.

“Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam has told me, according to Ibn Lahī‘a, according to Yazīd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥaḍramī: Ibn Diyās brought to him, when he was appointed governor of the Pentapolis, the written text of their treaty (*‘ahd*). Abū ‘Ubayd says: Ibn Diyās was a Christian Nabatean<sup>15</sup> of Egypt, a Copt.”

We note immediately as an accessory detail that the text of Ibn Sallām requires a modification of A. Gateau’s translation, which is plausible in itself and which we provisionally accepted above, in regard to Ibn Diyās. He is the one who delivers the peace treaty (*atāhu bnu Diyāsīn bi...*) and not the one who receives it. The ambiguity of pronouns, one of the habitual bugbears of the Arabic language, does not allow us to determine with certainty to whom the treaty was sent, or even who, on this occasion, was governor of the Pentapolis. This is not the place to discuss this further.

C) A few lines lower down in the same chapter, regarding black populations linked to the Muslims by a treaty of peace, our third passage reads as follows (pp. 146–7):

“‘Abd Allāh b. Šālīḥ tells us, according al-Layth b. Sa‘d... If they sell their children and their wives, I see no objection to buying them.

“Al-Layth has said: Yaḥya b. Sa‘īd al-Anṣārī saw no objection to this. He said: If people who are enemies (of Islam), linked (to us) by a treaty (*ahl al-ṣulḥ min al-‘aduww*) sell their children, there is no objection to buying them.

[115] “Abū ‘Ubayd says: Such was the personal opinion (*ra’y*) of al-Awzā‘ī, who said: There is no objection to this, because our judicial rules do not apply to them. But Sufyān and the Iraqis denounce this practice.

“Abū ‘Ubayd says: of the two opinions, it is the latter which I prefer; in effect, where there is accord, there is safeguard (*li-anna l-muwāda‘ata amān*).<sup>16</sup> How then can we make slaves of them?”

<sup>15</sup> “Nabatean” is to be taken in the sense of non-Arab sedentary cultivator”; see Honigmann, *EI* (first ed.) art. *Nabateans*.

<sup>16</sup> On the meaning of *muwada‘a*, see Heffening, *Das islamische Fremdenrecht*, Hanover 1925, p. 31, n. 4.

D) The fourth of our passages, situated in a different chapter, takes up this question of the enslavement of the *ahl al-ṣulḥ*. First there is a fairly lengthy discussion of an old case, on the basis of which Ibn Sallām re-affirms: These people are in a condition of freedom and they cannot become slaves either by capture or by purchase. Then he continues (pp. 183-4): “Yaḥya b. Bukayr has told me, according to ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī‘ā, according to Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb: ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz has written on the subject of the *Lawātiyyāt*: Whosoever lets one of them go has no right to her price, that is to say, the price the payment of which renders legal her status as a wife – although he used another term in the sense of price. And he added: Whosoever has one of them in his home should ask her father for her hand in marriage or send her back to her kinsfolk.”

“Abū ‘Ubayd says: *Lawātiyyāt* signifies wives of the Lawāta, a segment of the Berbers who are known by this name. I believe that they had a treaty (*‘ahd*) and it is to them that Ibn Shihāb was referring; ‘Uthmān imposed the *jizya* on Berbers. Subsequently they provoked disorder and were imprisoned: it was then that ‘Umar wrote about them.

“‘Abd Allāh b. Šāliḥ tells us, that according to al-Layth b. Sa’d: ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ addressed this clause in writing to the Lawāta Berbers, inhabitants of Barqa: You sell your sons and daughters to discharge your debt of *jizya*. Al-Layth said: If they were slaves, they could not have done it legally.”

Thus we find in these fragments of Ibn Sallām, bearing in mind three omissions which we shall shortly be analysing, the text of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, and more precisely still, as [116] is natural since he is their avowed source, that of al-Balādhurī. Notably, the formulas lent to ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and to al-Layth are those maintained by al-Balādhurī, while suppressing the first half of the instructions of ‘Umar. Are we not certain now that all of this is tightly linked to the problems discussed by *fiqh*?

Once the principle of treaty and *jizya* in relations with the pagans or with some among them was accepted, it was still necessary to determine the consequences of this, and establish the status of these people with regard to Islam. And on this issue the schools were far from unanimous. One of the most delicate problems was the following: was it permissible to buy as slaves members of these *foederati* peoples? Or, in a slightly different form: was it permissible to accept as slaves, as part of the tribute paid by the *foederati*, their own wives and their children? It is this question which should be answered by the texts that we are about to study.

Al-Layth b. Sa’d, the great Egyptian traditionist and jurist, and al-Awzā‘ī, accepted, so Ibn Sallām tells us, the purchase of the wives and children of “federated” peoples. Sufyān, i.e. Sufyān al-Thawrī, founder of a rite which was

to prove very short-lived, and the Iraqis, i.e. the partisans of Abū Ḥanīfa, disapproved of it; and Ibn Sallām sided with them. We have confirmation elsewhere of an identical position, affirmative in the case of al-Awzā'ī, negative in the case of Abū Ḥanīfa, dealing not with sale as such, but with delivery by virtue of tribute.<sup>17</sup> Al-Shāfi'ī is in favour of this last clause in a pact with foreign elements.<sup>18</sup> Mālik forbids both the purchase of these children and the acceptance of them as tribute, at least when these peoples have dealt with the Muslims for only one year or two.<sup>19</sup> The account of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, borrowed on this point from al-Layth himself, is manifestly in favour of the affirmative solution, that of al-Layth and of al-Awzā'ī, [117] at least insofar as children are concerned: did the Traditions which he relates, raising no objection, originally have the purpose of justifying this legal solution? Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, to the extent that he takes responsibility for the account, departs here from the teaching of Mālik to accept that of an Egyptian master.

We now turn to examining the sayings of al-Layth and of 'Umar, reported by Ibn Sallām and retained, one in its entirety and the other in its second half, by al-Balādhurī. Al-Layth declares that, if the Lawāta were slaves, they could not have proceeded to the regular sale of their children: a judicial remark, establishing the status of the free men of the *ahl al-sulḥ*, even in the eyes of those *fuqahā'* who permitted the purchase by Muslims of the said children as slaves. It could be that Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam or some intermediary narrator was not intent upon insisting on this point: putting too much emphasis on the notion of liberty no doubt entailed the risk, at the end of the day, of seeing it turn against the very thesis which had been adopted, with Layth, and which authorised the enslaving of these children.

The suppression by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam of 'Umar's statement perhaps derives from the same sentiment. But it could be accounted for by another tempting explanation, if the commentary supplied by Ibn Sallām is studied with care: for him, the precept of 'Umar was formulated in the wake of incidents provoked by the Lawāta and the arrest of the latter. Now the two parts of the precept, suppressing with regard to Lawātian women the ordinary rights of a master over a female slave (collecting her dowry or cohabiting with her without marriage) had a common and evident objective: to have them considered free women. And this could have only one meaning: the treaty

<sup>17</sup> Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilāf*, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> *Kitāb al-Umm*, ed. Boulak, 1321-26 H., IV, 188. Al-Māwardī, Shāfi'ite theoretician of the 11th century, writes in his *Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya*, tr. Fagnan, Algiers 1915, p. 287, that it is permitted to buy, but not to reduce into captivity, the children of "allied" peoples (*ahl al-'ahd*), while both of these procedures are forbidden with the children of "protected" peoples (*ahl al-dhimma*).

<sup>19</sup> *Mudawwana*, X, 16-8, Heffening, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

concluded with these Berbers remained valid; it was not abrogated by their momentary outburst. This accords with the indulgent solution proposed in this case by the schools of Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfiʿī.<sup>20</sup> Mālikism was more severe and [118] and quicker to announce the invalidation of the pact on account of an offence committed by the non-Muslim partners.<sup>21</sup> For this reason it was quite natural for the Mālikite Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam not to accept the statement attributed to 'Umar.

It is in the same order of ideas that we will find the best explanation of the solemn declaration put into the mouth of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ, which, featuring neither in Ibn Sallām nor in al-Balādhurī, is owed to the pen of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam. If we consult a book of *Ikhtilāf*: “When a treaty is concluded with the polytheists, it must be scrupulously observed with regard to them (*idhā 'ūhida l- mushrikūna 'ahdan u'ufiya lahum bihi*)” is the view of the founders of the orthodox rites, with the exception of Abū Ḥanīfa. For the latter, the interests of the Muslim nation authorised the unilateral abrogation of the contract.<sup>22</sup> The Mālikites would have liked to cite proofs of the contrary, predominant opinion: the formula lent to 'Amr (*'ahdun yāfa lahum bihi*) is precisely that of the scholars of *fiqh*.

We may finally ask what is the significance of the two other remarks which, absent from the *Kitāb al-Amwāl*, are to be found in the works of both Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and al-Balādhurī. Both of them bear on the *jizya* of our Lawāta of Pentapolis: one of them states the amount, thirteen thousand dinars; the other affirms that in ancient times the Lawāta regularly paid this *jizya* of their own accord, and on the due dates. On the figure, whether thirteen is correct or not, we shall not linger. We only make the remark that, given the aggregate amount, it represents not a “capitation” as A. Gateau translates, but a “tribute”: this is the ancient sense of the term, very widely and definitely attested. It has survived in classical Islamic law which, alongside the

<sup>20</sup> The statement by 'Umar raises a difficulty however in authorising marriage with the *Lawātiyyāt*. Tradition in effect makes two exceptions in regard to the assimilation of the “Majūs” into the “People of the Book”; Muslims should not eat animals slaughtered by them, nor marry their non-converted women. These two prohibitions are recorded for example by the Ḥanafite Abū Yūsuf, *K. al-Kharāj*, tr., p. 101, and by the Shāfiʿite al-Māwardī, *Aḥkam sulṭāniyya*, tr., p. 302; Ibn Sallām, in his *K. al-Amwāl*, p. 31, has enunciated them. Concubinage with a captive, non-converted *majūsiyya* is also most often forbidden: cf. Abū Yūsuf, *op. cit.*, p. 319, *K. al-Umm*, IV, 186. It is thus probable that 'Umar, or the one speaking through him, did not consider the Lawāta in question as “Majūs” whose status is somewhat particular, but as *ahl al-sulḥ* or *ahl al-dhimma*, without distinction between the “People of the Book” and them.

<sup>21</sup> Dimashqī, *Raḥmat al-Umma*, p. 309.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

capitation-*jizya*, is perfectly well aware [119] of the *jizya ṣulḥiyya*, based on a law-making pact,<sup>23</sup> and consequently liable to take on the form of an aggregate and contractual contribution on fixed terms.

As for the precise information supplied on the punctual and spontaneous delivery of the *jizya*, this needs to be linked to a subsequent passage of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (p. 77), relating to events which he locates a half-century later, in 697. Ḥassān b. al-Nu‘mān was returning after completing the conquest of Ifrīqiya: “Passing through Barqa, he entrusted the collection of the *kharāj* there to Ibrāhīm b. al-Naṣrānī.” And a little further on, the same page: “After the departure of Ḥassān, the Byzantines launched an expedition against Pentapolis. Ibrāhīm b. al-Naṣrānī fled, abandoning the inhabitants and the protected peoples of the Pentapolis (*ahla Anṭābulusa wa-ahla dhimmatihā*),<sup>24</sup> in the hands of the Byzantines.” In the spirit of our author, a change of administrative and fiscal regime had definitely come about since the time of ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ.<sup>25</sup> As he does not explain this issue, we are reduced to hypotheses; some clues plausibly direct us towards a solution in accord with those proposed a little earlier.

All in all we have, on the one hand, the first insistence found in our text on the obligation of Muslims to observe the pact and on the punctuality of the non-Muslim partners; and here on the other hand, without a reason given, the fiscal autonomy of these last-named, an essential and legitimate clause of the contract, is presented as being abolished. And who is this who is collecting the *kharāj* from them?<sup>26</sup> The “son of a Christian”, Ibn al-Naṣrānī, who flees, at the first alarm, before Christians engaged in a raid. In fact we know of the role which Christians and the sons [120] of Christians played in Egypt and elsewhere in the financial organisation of the Arab empire; and we have seen that on several occasions, Tradition allocated a role to a Copt, Ibn Diyās, in the affairs of the Pentapolis in the early years of Islam. Without expressing it overtly, has Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam or one of his sources not heard denunciation, through an example, authentic or otherwise, of some or other measure of public law? And in the very attitude, hardly a glorious one, which he assigns to Ibn al-Naṣrānī, is there not an echo of the discontent which could or did

<sup>23</sup> See for example Averroes, *Bidāya*, ed. Cairo 1935, I. 392.

<sup>24</sup> Should these *ahl al-dhimma* be explained by reference to what has been stated above (note 20) of the opinion attributed to ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz?

<sup>25</sup> The sparse items of information collected by Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, art. *Barqa*, do not bring any real clarity to the subject. They only record the assimilation of the majority of the inhabitants, then the breaking of the treaty.

<sup>26</sup> This is doubtless not the place to expatiate on the difference between the terms: *jizya* / *kharāj*. Al-Balādhurī furthermore once uses *kharāj* where Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam says *jizya*, and to denote what he himself was to call *jizya* in other passages.

prevail in the world of the *fuqahā'*, regarding those non-Muslims or recently converted Muslims who became too involved in the financial administration of the state?

If the Traditions collected in works of the Ninth Century on the events of the Seventh Century or the early Eighth Century serve to illustrate theses or to support points of view, is there not here, over and above the considerable interval of time which separates them from the facts, grave cause for suspicion? Certain fluctuations, furthermore, come to light, with the effect of augmenting our legitimate mistrust and further consolidating, if needed, the explanation of these accounts with the aid of *fiqh*. It would be possible without too much difficulty to reconcile the episode of Ibn al-Naṣrānī with the statement of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, which would necessarily be some twenty years later. But, on the very conquest of the Pentapolis and the conclusion of the treaty with the Lawāta Berbers, a serious contradiction remains, which Ibn Sallām has not perceived: on the one hand, there seems to have been an aspiration to associate both these episodes, as he did himself, to the caliph 'Uthmān; and on the other hand, an explicit Tradition gives responsibility for these, at a date prior to the reign of 'Uthmān, to 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ.

2. – An uncertainty of the same kind is no doubt attached to another phase of the conquest, that concerning Fezzan. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam writes, in the course of that kind of epic in prose which narrates the exploits of the great conqueror 'Uqba b. Nāfi': "When he was close (to Jerma, capital of the Fezzan), he sent messengers to invite the inhabitants to embrace Islam (*fa-da'āhum ilā l-Islām*); they accepted."<sup>27</sup> [121] This episode gives the impression of having taken place around 668. The feature of the invitation to convert does not recur in reference to any other conquests on the part of 'Uqba.

Once again we refer to the *Mudawwana*, a few lines below our quotation on the Berber "Majūs". Here we read (III, 46): "Mālik was questioned on the subject of the Fezzanese (*al-Fazāzina*), who are a race of Ethiopians (*jinsun mina l-Ḥabasha*). When asked, he replied: "I am not of the opinion that they should be fought before being invited to embrace Islam (*ḥatta yud'aw ilā l-Islām*)... If they do not accept this, they will be invited to pay the *djizya* while retaining their religion; if they respond favourably, this will be accepted of them. This shows you the opinion of Mālik on the subject of all peoples whosoever they may be; because, what he says of the Fezzanese applies equally to the Slavs, to the Avars, to the Turks and to other non-Arabs who are not People of the Book."

<sup>27</sup> Page 59 of the translation by A. Gateau, slightly modified. The same account occurs in al-Bakrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–4.

This text, which it seems to me has escaped to this day the attention of academics specialising in study of the Fezzan, offers in my opinion two interesting features:<sup>28</sup> that of regarding the Fezzanese as “Ethiopians” in the Eighth or Ninth Century (the *Mudawwana* emanates from Egyptian and Kairouanese circles, among which some could have had some serious information on the subject) and that of dating, so it seems, the conquest and islamisation of Fezzan to the time of Mālik, i.e. the second half of the Eighth Century, under the first of the ‘Abbāsids, a hundred years later than in the Tradition of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam.<sup>29</sup>

Is it by the same token that the *Mudawwana* does not suggest any explanation, or at least one of the reasons, for this projection into the past? “I am not of the opinion that they should be fought before being invited to embrace Islam,” said Mālik. To reinforce this precept, was it tempting [122] to show it being applied prematurely by an illustrious hero of the earliest times? Before fighting the Fezzanese – and this would not even be necessary – ‘Uqba invites them, according to the rule to be enunciated by Mālik with regard to this people precisely, to embrace Islam.<sup>30</sup>

## II – Distribution of Booty

If there is one aspect of *fiqh* which takes its place easily, and even naturally, in an account of victorious campaigns, it is indeed the distribution of booty. So it comes as no surprise to find in the work of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, describing the conquest of the West, numerous passages referring to it.

<sup>28</sup> See, for more details on this subject, R. Brunschvig, *Un texte arabe du IX<sup>e</sup> siècle intéressant le Fezzan*, in *Rev. Africaine*, 1945, pp. 21–25.

<sup>29</sup> According to the Schacht edition of the *K. al-Ikhtilāf* by al-Ṭabarī, p. 200, Mālik would also have been asked about the imposition of the *jizya* on “the *Fazāzina* and the races of Turks and Hindus without religion”. But since the ms. has **العرار**, there are reservations to be made over the reading *Fazāzina*.

<sup>30</sup> A passage of the *Mudawwana*, III, 3, gives, under the name of Ibn Wahb, eminent disciple of Mālik, an interesting Tradition, according to ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’, according to Rabī’a: the last-named taught that the enemy should be persistently invited to convert before being attacked. Is the reference here to our ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’? If this is the case it would prove that one or two generations before Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam there was effectively a tendency, among the Mālikites of Egypt, to associate our hero with this norm of *fiqh*. The fact is all the more worthy of note in that ‘Uqba does not feature among the traditionists habitually mentioned. Another passage of the *Mudawwana*, X, 108, which marks the desire to attach the international public law to a major figure of the Conquest, and at the same time uncertainty over the period of the deed invoked: Mālik heard it said that it was ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ or ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d who “negotiated” (*āhada*) with the “Nubians”.

1. – The first concerns the expedition of 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd, the most ancient wide-ranging raid mounted against what is now Tunisia, which could be situated, as we have indicated, around 647: "He divided the booty between us, having set aside a fifth. The share of each cavalryman amounted to three thousand dinars: two thousand for the horse, one thousand for his master. Each infantryman received one thousand dinars. One of the soldiers having died at Dhāt al-Humām, his family received a thousand dinars" (p. 41).

It is immediately clear that it is appropriate to divide this text into three parts, into three elements: A) the setting aside of a fifth, B) the share of the cavalryman and that of the infantryman, C) the share of the deceased soldier. The two latter parts are repeated immediately afterwards, and in almost identical terms, with partially different chains of informants: it is a classical and confirmed procedure of apparent precision.

[123] A) The setting aside of the fifth is of canonical order (Qur'ān, VIII, 42), and does not in itself call upon any particular commentary. It is mentioned again at a later stage, when the Umayyad caliph Sulaymān is invited to put it into practice (pp. 101–103) and in a procedure which is presented as being correct, after the battle of Poitiers (p. 117). A connected question will oblige us presently to return to this setting aside of booty.

B) The cavalryman receives three times as much as the infantryman: one share for him and two for his horse. This is the same as the ratio indicated by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam for a later expedition in Ifrīqiya which, in 655, would have ended in the taking of Jalūlā (p. 55); and it is found in the writings of other historians. Such was, in fact, the solution which all orthodox jurists had ultimately adopted as conforming to the practice of the Prophet. Only Abū Hanīfa objected to this, claiming that it would be improper to give more to the animal than to the human being: accordingly he awarded only two shares to the cavalryman, one for him and one for his horse. But his disciples refused to follow him on this point: Abū Yūsuf reverted to the dominant solution as taught by Mālik and by all the other *imām*-s.<sup>31</sup>

C) The share of a soldier who dies before the distribution is reserved for his natural heirs. It is as well to pause at this point, because this was a question much discussed, generating various fine distinctions. What was the position on this of the principal masters of *fiqh*?

<sup>31</sup> Mālik, *Muwatta'*, ed. cit., III, 196; *Mudawwana*, III, 32; Abū Yūsuf, *K. al-Kharāj*, tr. pp. 28–29; the same, *Al-Radd 'alā siyar al-Awzā'i*, ed. Cairo, 1357 H., p. 17; K. *al-Umm*, IV, 69, VII, 306, 320; Ṭabari, *Ikhtilāf*, pp. 80–1; Dimashqī, *Raḥmat al-Umma*, p. 298.



Abū Hanīfa, supported this time by his pupil Abū Yūsuf, demanded that, for the deceased to be taken into account, the man should have died, not only after the taking of the booty, but also after the safe delivery of the latter into Islamic territory. Al-Shāfiʿī was content with the proviso that the man died after the taking of booty. Mālik accepted the reservation of his share for his family if he had fought and been killed before the victory and the taking of booty, but refused it if the individual had died in the course of the expedition before fighting. Al-Awzāʿī, the least demanding [124] of all, on the basis of an example attributed to the Prophet, allowed this posthumous sharing in the booty, provided that the deceased had died having joined in a campaign “in the way of Allāh”.<sup>32</sup>

In the case presented to us by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, the man died, apparently of a natural death (*tuwuffiyya*, *māta*), at Dhāt al-Ḥumām, i.e. on the fringes of Egypt and of the desert.<sup>33</sup> A. Gateau translates the second of the *ḥadīth*-s relating to this anonymous individual: “...an infantryman who had participated in the Ifrīqiya expedition was killed at Dhāt al-Humām.” The text does not say “infantryman” here (*rājil*) but “man, soldier” (*raḡul*): it does not say “was killed” but “died”; the formula “*kharaja fī ghazwati Ifrīqiyata*” indicates only that the person involved set out on a campaign with the army, not, as the translation could be taken to imply, that he was on the way home. The distribution in which he participates after his demise also gives the impression of taking place at long range, in enemy territory. He died, we are given to understand, before fighting. The solution conforms, not with the opinion of Mālik, but with the rite of al-Awzāʿī, and is based on an argument of traditional order. It would no doubt be more accurate to say: our account reinforces this solution of traditional order.

2. – The second passage to be examined on the distribution of booty refers to an important and very delicate question, that of *naḡal*: in what measure and according to which norms could a warrior chieftain favour certain combatants or a group among them in the distribution of booty?

Here as *supra*, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam gives consecutively on the same page (p. 53) two similar versions of the same action, distinguished by one or two variants in the list of informants. We are witnessing the second major campaign which the Arabs would have launched against Ifrīqiya: commanded

<sup>32</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Al-Radd ʿalā siyar al-Awzāʿī*, pp. 23–30; K. *al-Umm*, VII, 307; Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilāf*, pp. 76–8.

<sup>33</sup> Bakrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11; Idrīsī, *Description de l’Afrique et de l’Espagne*, ed.-tr. Dozy/ de Goeje, Leiden 1866, p. 137/ 164.

by Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj, it would have taken place in 654 at the end of the caliphate of 'Uthmān.

[125] The first version reads: "... according to Sulaymān b. Yasār,<sup>34</sup> who said: We made an expedition into Ifrīqiya with Ibn Ḥudayj, in the company of a large number of Muhājirūn and of Anṣār. Ibn Ḥudayj gave us in the form of *praecipuum* (*naffalanā*) half (of the booty) having set aside the fifth. I saw no one who disapproved of this, other than Jabala b. 'Amr al-Anṣārī."

The second version is in these terms: "I questioned Sulaymān b. Yasār on the subject of the *naḥal* practised in the course of an expedition. He answered me: I never saw anyone do this other than Ibn Ḥudayj; in Ifrīqiya he gave us half (the booty) having set aside the fifth. There were with us a large number of Companions of the Prophet among the first Muhājirūn: Jabala b. 'Amr refused to take whatever this was."<sup>35</sup>

The lines which have just been read correct the translation by A. Gâteau on a number of points. In the first version, Jabala did not "refuse" (*abā*) as in the second, but "disapproved" (*ankara*). In the second version, the informant interrogates Sulaymān, not "on the subject of the sharing of booty, in the course of the expedition," but rather on the familiar judicial question of the "*praecipuum* in the distribution of booty in the course of an expedition" (*'ani l-naḥali fī l-ghazw*): the article here has the generic sense which, in this type of expression, is characteristic of it;<sup>36</sup> the precision "in Ifrīqiya" given in the response confirms it. The text does not say "Only Ibn Ḥudayj carried out this distribution," but "I saw only Ibn Ḥudayj carry it out." And above all, in one and the other version, the translation "Ibn Ḥudayj gave us in distribution half of the booty in addition to the fifth" needs to be rectified: first because it is silent on the issue of *naḥal*, which is however articulated; then because the expression *ba'da l-khumusi* does not signify, as it had already been translated, [126] erroneously, by Ben Cheneb in a similar account,<sup>37</sup> "in addition to the fifth" but "after the fifth had been set aside"; numerous judicial tests prove (we shall be showing an example of this shortly) that the expression is synonymous with *ba'da ikhrāji l-khumusi*.

<sup>34</sup> Traditionist and jurist of Medina, died circa 720; see, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *Classes des savants de l'Ifrīqiya*, Algiers 1920, p. 49, n. 2. It will be noted that he was probably too young to have taken part in the campaign in question.

<sup>35</sup> These two versions are revived by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam in the collection of *ḥadīth*-s which concludes his book, cf. Torrey edition, pp. 317–18.

<sup>36</sup> A chapter of the *Muwatṭa'* of Mālik, ed. cit., III, 176. is intitled *Jāmi'u l-naḥali fī l-ghazw*.

<sup>37</sup> Abū l-'Arab, *Ṭabaqāt*, in Ben Cheneb, *Classes des savants de l'Ifrīqiya*, ed. tr. Paris-Algiers 1915–20, pp. 15/49.

Here we once again consult the *Kitāb al-Amwāl* of Ibn Sallām. Dealing at length with *naḡal* and its connections with the setting aside of the fifth, this is how the author expresses himself (p. 308):

“For the *naḡal* which the Imam awards, there are four (different) solutions: one relates to *naḡal* without the fifth, the second, the *naḡal* which is taken on the booty after having set aside the fifth (*baʿda ikhrāji l-khumusi*), the third, the *naḡal* which is taken on the fifth itself, the fourth, the *naḡal* that is taken on the totality of booty before anything has been set aside according to the principle of the fifth.”

“The first solution,” Ibn Sallām continues, “had to do with *salab*, stripping an enemy combatant killed in hand to hand fighting. The second, that of the *naḡal* which is taken on the booty after the fifth has been set aside (*baʿda l-khumusi*), is for the benefit of detachments sent ahead into enemy territory and bringing back booty: each detachment receives a third or a quarter of what it brings back, after the setting aside of the fifth (*baʿda l-khumusi*)”. Is the synonymy of *baʿda l-khumusi* with *baʿda ikhrāji l-khumusi* not thus demonstrated?

In the third solution, in conditions not specified by Ibn Sallām, the *imām* proceeds to the setting aside of the fifth on the totality of booty, then, on the booty itself, he distributes as *naḡal* according to his personal choice. The fourth and last solution is for the benefit of guides or spies who have rendered services to the army. And our author, adding that one or the other of these solutions has its *ḥadīth*-s and its controversies, devotes to each of them an entire chapter.

The first and the fourth solution are no more, in sum, [127] than particular cases. It was principally between the second and the third that choices had to be made: is the *naḡal* a *praecipuum*, for the benefit of a military detachment, on the four fifths of the booty before the distribution, or does it consist in the attribution, over and above these four fifths, of a part or of the totality or the fifth? The implication is that the account which is the object of our study corresponds to the second solution. To which judicial school should this practice be attributed?

The position of Mālik, forcefully declared, is well known, reproduced in all the works of *fiqh*: “*lā naḡala illa mina l-khumusi*, there is no *naḡal* except on the fifth”.<sup>38</sup> Sufyān al-thawrī taught the same.<sup>39</sup> Al-Shāfiʿī was even more strict,

<sup>38</sup> See especially Mālik, *Muwattaʿa*, ed. cit., III, 194–5; *Mudawwana*, III, 30; Ibn Sallām, *K. al-Amwāl*, p. 320; Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilāf*, p. 128; Averroes, *Bidāya*, I, 382–3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Sallām, *op. cit.*, pp. 320, 323.

limiting the *naḡal* to the fifth of the fifth, in other words to the bare minimum which was all that was due, according to him, to the *imām*.<sup>40</sup> All of this conforms to the third of Ibn Sallām's solutions.

Abū Hanīfa and al-Awzā'ī, on the other hand, stood by the second of these solutions. But Abū Hanīfa demanded a prior decision by the chief of the army: the latter should have promised in advance to the men of a detachment, to incite them to fight with greater valour, a *praecipuum* on the booty to come.<sup>41</sup> This does not seem to be the case in our account; furthermore, the distribution takes place there in enemy territory, which is contrary to the doctrine of Abū Hanīfa. Al-Awzā'ī did not make such a promise *a sine qua non*. Referring to a *ḥadīth* transmitted under the name of Ḥabīb b. Maslama, he recalled that the Prophet had awarded to his military contingents, on top of the four fifths of the booty due to the army in total, a *praecipuum* of a quarter on departure and of a third on return (*al-rubu' fī baḍ'atih wa-l-thuluth fī raj'atih*); and he considered each of these figures as a maximum.<sup>42</sup> The higher rate for the return was justified, it seems, by [128] the need, at this stage of the campaign, to bolster the fighting spirit of men impatient to march back to their homes.

Our account thus accords with the view of Al-Awzā'ī except on one point: the rate of the *naḡal*, which for him was a third at the most, and which here is a half. We have another version of this *ḥadīth* of Sulaymān b. Yasār in the *Ṭabaqāt* of Abū l-'Arab al-Tamīmī,<sup>43</sup> who was born in Kairouan at about the time of the death of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam: this version, very similar to the one we are studying, specifies the third, in conformity with the precept of al-Awzā'ī, and not the half. Which proportion is the older? Perhaps we have here an indication in favour of the antiquity of our text in the fact that it contains a solution which is slightly aberrant in relation to the established rites.

We may now note that Abū l-'Arab's account does not include the final phrase referring to the disapproval or the refusal of Jabala: according to him, the agreement of the onlookers, the first Muslims, to allow this to happen, was not marred by any opponent; there was, locally at least, *ijmā' al-ṣaḥāba*, consensus of the Companions of the Prophet; and the *ḥadīth* – related elsewhere by the great Mālikite jurist Saḥnūn without commentary – to all appearances, supports the solution of al-Awzā'ī against the personal opinion of the *imām* Mālik.

The text of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam requires more delicacy in interpretation. There is no general consensus, but unanimity minus one. The one who

<sup>40</sup> *K. al-Umm*, IV, 68; Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilāf*, p. 127.

<sup>41</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *K. al-Kharāj*, tr., pp. 305–6; Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Sallām, *op. cit.*, pp. 315–320; Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–125.

<sup>43</sup> In Ben Cheneb, *loc. cit.*

disrupts the *ijma'*, without having attained any celebrity, is mentioned by other authors and praised as a virtuous Companion well versed in matters of religion.<sup>44</sup> It is not clear whether he denounces the very principal of *naḥal* levied on the four-fifths of the booty, or just the high level of the rate.<sup>45</sup> If it is the rate that he has in mind, the *ḥadīth* has to be taken [129] in the same sense as the version of Saḥnūn and of Abū l-ʿArab; in one form or the other, we thus have the testimony – the phenomenon is not unique, far from it – that eminent members of the primitive Mālikite school thought otherwise than their master on certain points.

3. – It is still in the context of the campaigns of Muʿāwiya b. Ḥudayj that two other passages from Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam refer to the manner of distributing the booty.

A) After the taking of Jalūlā, in Tunisia, by a detachment of troops, since there was no agreement, we are told, on the distribution, Ibn Ḥudayj consulted in writing the caliph of Damascus Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān. The latter replied: “The troops as a totality are the life-blood of a detachment (*inna l-ʿaskara ridʿun li-l-sariyyati*); you should therefore share among all” (p. 55).

Another classic question, but resolved in this instance, in the same fashion and in identical terms, by all orthodoxy.<sup>46</sup> Whether or not there has been setting aside of a *praecipuum* after that of the fifth, the remainder of the booty must be distributed equally between the personnel of the detachments which took the booty and the detachments of the rest of the army. Only one of the most ancient founders of a rite, a short-lived rite as it turned out to be, the Iraqi Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaī, taught that the *imām* who sent a detachment into action could subsequently, as he chose, set aside the fifth on the booty collected by the detachment or award to it the booty in its entirety as *naḥal*. And the treaties of *fiqh*, when justifying the dominant solution, adopt precisely the expression used by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam. Ibn Sallām writes for example: “*li-anna ḥadhā l-ʿaskara ridʿun li-l-sarāyā*”; and the Mālikite Averroes was to write that the

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Nājī, *Maʿālim al-Imān*, vol. I, ed. Tunis 1320 H., p. 110 (the source of which is the *Riyāḍ al-Nufūs* of al-Mālikī, 11th century). See also Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, ed. Cairo, 1286 H., I, 269 (where our *ḥadīth* is reproduced, with the “third”) and Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, ed. Cairo, 1328 H., I, 223–4, n° 1080.

<sup>45</sup> In the version of the *Maʿālim al-Imān*, there is neither rate, nor fifth: Jabala seems to be denying here any kind of *naḥal*. Is this the first form of the *ḥadīth*, or conversely a degenerate form?

<sup>46</sup> See especially Ṭabarī, *Ikhtilāf*, p. 71 and Ibn Ḥazm, *Marātib al-Ijmāʿ*, ed. Cairo 1357 H., pp. 117–8.

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people of the *'askar* have the right to the booty of the *sariyya*: "*an yakūna riḍ'an li-man ḥaḍara l-qitāla (wa hum ahlu l-sariyyati)*".<sup>47</sup>

B) Further on, our author discreetly mentions the granting [130] by the caliph 'Uthmān to the Umayyad Marwān b. al-Ḥakam of the fifth set aside from the booty which Ibn Ḥudayj had taken in Ifriqiya (p. 57).

According to other historians, this was one of the blunders on the part of 'Uthmān which alienated a significant section of public opinion and was to hasten his tragic end.<sup>48</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam – we shall return to that subject shortly – may have wanted to salvage the memory of this caliph, and hence not to dwell on such a gesture which would have denounced him for poor political judgement. But it should also be recognised that in strict legal terms it was not easy to criticise him: the procedure was entirely in accordance with the doctrine of Mālik, which allowed the leader of the Muslim state full and free disposition of the fifth, to distribute as he pleased or to keep for himself.<sup>49</sup>

4. – The conquest of Spain and the raids against islands such as Sardinia gave rise to accounts of pillage, and although the details seem to belong to legend, the phenomenon as a whole must have been authentic. The conquerors cherished for a long time the memory of their amazement on encountering the riches of Iberia, compared with the relative poverty of North Africa, and succeeding generations took pleasure in describing precious booty and recounting how treasures were seized.

However, among our transmitters of Tradition, the judicial-religious spirit was as strong as ever, and attention should be given to two curious episodes reported in the text of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam which, one immediately after the other, recount the supernatural punishment of certain pillagers. In the first, which in itself comprises two versions given one after the other, the culprits hear in the open sea, on the ship which is transporting them with their loot, a voice crying: "My God, drown them!" Surrounding themselves with copies of the Qur'ān is to no avail and a tempest engulfs them, sparing, the second version adds, two innocents mentioned by name, known to be religious figures. In the second episode, the culprit, who has hidden the pilfered object

<sup>47</sup> Ibn al-Sallām, *K. al-Amwāl*, pp. 317, 321, Averroes, *Bidāya*, I, 381. In Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, p. 141, it is perhaps again, in accordance with the reading adopted by A. Gateau, a case of *naḥal*; for the translation "a supplementary distribution of booty" a better substitute would be "a preferential sharing of booty".

<sup>48</sup> See especially al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, V. ed. Gotein, Jerusalem 1936, pp. 25, 27, 28, 88.

<sup>49</sup> Dimashqī, *Raḥmat al-Umma*, p. 297.

[131] in a sack of pitch, cries out at the moment of death: “In the pitch, in the pitch!” (pp. 95–99).<sup>50</sup>

Why these scenes and these punishments? The translation by A. Gateau includes on a number of occasions, on the subject of these incidents, the terms “fraud” or “defraud”: “...were guilty of numerous *frauds*... that day, they *defrauded* as much as they could... who were not reckoned guilty of any *fraud*... having carried away the proceeds of his *frauds*...” This is undoubtedly “fraud”; but it requires more precision, if the text is not to be deprived of its full meaning.

The Arabic uses, each time, the verb *ghalla* and its verbal substantive *ghulūl*; for example: “*ghalla* (pl. *ghallū*) *ghalūlan kathīran*”. Now *ghulūl* is, in religious Tradition, something very precise which is formally proscribed: it is the concealment of booty and its misappropriation to the disadvantage of other members of the army. The Prophet himself had been obliged to defend himself against such an accusation, hence Qurʾān III, 133: “It is not the deed of a prophet to misappropriate booty (*an yaghulla*); he who misappropriates booty will appear with the object of his misappropriation (*wa-man yaghlul yaʿti bi-mā ghalla*) on the Day of Resurrection”; hence also numerous *ḥadīth*-s, which denounce this particular kind of malpractice. The orthodox rites were unanimous in recognising its extreme gravity. Mālik devotes a section to it, with five *ḥadīth*-s, in his *Muwattaʿa*;<sup>51</sup> it is thus not insignificant that he himself features in the first episode related by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam.

These edifying accounts had the purpose – and this also reveals their origin – of illustrating the teaching of the scholars who, following in the wake of the Prophet, made of *ghulūl* a major sin.<sup>52</sup>

### III. – Fasting, Prayer, Other Questions of Fiqh

[132] The judicio-religious problems raised by the holy war are not the only ones touched on in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam’s account. We are now going to see two

<sup>50</sup> This last episode is to be found again, with the name of the same informant, al-Layth b. Saʿd, in the *Kitāb al-Imāma wa-l-Siyāsa*, of pseudo-Ibn Qutayba, which probably dates from the end of the 9th century, ed. Cairo 1901, II, 123; in place of “pitch” (*ziḥ*) it is in this case a “sack treated with pitch” (*muzaffat*).

<sup>51</sup> Mālik, *Muwattaʿa*, ed. cit., III, 198–204; Tabarī, *Ikhtilāf*, p. 110.

<sup>52</sup> It is again in reference to booty and its sharing that another question of *fiqh* arises: the exchange between precious metals, here between unrefined gold and gold coinage (p. 43). Our text tends to show, in accordance with the orthodox rule, anxious to avoid “usury” or *ribā*, that this exchange should be made on a basis of equality: the “surplus” (*faḍl*) cannot be abandoned by its owner in the form of a “gift” (*hiba*).

examples relating to cultic practices which are institutions fundamental to Islam: the fast of Ramaḍān and ritual prayer.

1.—The first example puts the spotlight on 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ during the expedition which enabled him to seize Tripoli. One of his old comrades in arms states: “We were debating the question of the compensatory observance of the fast of Ramaḍān (*qaḍā'a daymī ramaḍāna*). It should not be interrupted, said Hubayb b. Muḡhfil. It is not inappropriate to interrupt it, replied 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ, on condition that the number of days required is respected (*lā ba'sa an yufarraqa idhā uḥṣiyati l-ʿidda*)” (p. 35).<sup>53</sup>

As above in the case of *naḥal*, it is a matter, in the first phrase, of a classic question of *fiqh*, and not of a particular case, although it is in the instance of a particular case that the general question is effectively posed. The translation of A. Gateau: “There was debate over the question of the observance of the fast of Ramaḍān which we have not been able to accomplish,” should thus be modified, all the more so since this question risks applying the sequel “it should not be interrupted” to the feast of Ramaḍān itself, while the point at issue is its later compensatory observance.<sup>54</sup> A little further on, “It is not inappropriate” is closer to the text than “I see nothing inappropriate”: it is not given as a personal opinion (*ra'y*) held by 'Amr.

[133] It is known that according to Qurʾān II, 181, travellers may – indeed should according to the interpretation of some – postpone the fast to a later date for an equal number of days: “*fa-ʿiddatun min ayyāmīn*”. We are entitled to wonder, and the question has been debated by scholars, whether this compensatory fast, once begun, must be pursued all the days without interruption, and whether the one who breaks it will be held to account, as is the case with voluntary and unjustified breaking of the fast in the month of Ramaḍān. The majority of orthodox authorities have opted for the liberal solution: they do not regard as obligatory the uninterrupted succession (*tatābuʿ*) of the days of the *qaḍāʿ*, provided that there is observance of the total number of days required. “I would prefer,” says Mālik for example in the *Mudawwana* (I, 213) “to have continuity, but if someone acts otherwise he can (nevertheless) do his duty”.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *ʿIdda* seems to me a better reading than *ʿadad*, although having the same sense. It is definitely *ʿidda* that Torrey has read (p. 287) in the text of the *ḥadīth* as it is found in the final collection of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam.

<sup>54</sup> As would be proved, should this be necessary, by an explicit variant in the revival of this *ḥadīth*, ed. Torrey, *loc. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> See also Ibn Abī Zayd, *Risāla*, tr. Fagnan, Paris-Algiers, 1914, p. 80; Averroes, *Bidāya*, I, 289; Shāfiʿī, *K. al-Umm*, II, 85 (*idhā uḥṣiyati l-ʿidda*).



A little further on, the same page, the *Mudawwana* relates in the name of Ashhab, eminent Egyptian disciple of Ibn Lahī'a, of Layth b. Sa'd and especially of Mālik – as follows: "Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Hurayra, 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ, 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ, Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ, Mu'ādh b. Jabal said: It is not inappropriate to interrupt the compensatory fulfilment of the fast of Ramaḍān, on condition that there is observance of the number of days required (*la ba'sa bi-an yufarraqa qaḍā'u ramaḍāna idhā uḥṣiyati l-'idda*). Ibn 'Umar, Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab have declared it an offence to interrupt the compensatory fulfilment of Ramaḍān."

Are these not the same formulas that are to be found, penned by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam? Here too 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ is mentioned as a guarantor of permissibility. Hubayb b. Mughfil, holder of a contrary opinion in the *Futūḥ Miṣr*, is not named in Ashhab's list; he was regarded as a light-weight alongside the three eminent individuals listed here as sharing his point of view. This Hubayb b. Mughfil al-Ghifārī, Companion of the Prophet, was mentioned by the Egyptians in a number of *ḥadīth*-s: one specifically concerning prayer, and another, better known, forbidding carelessness, resulting from pride, in the wearing of [134] clothes; a valley to which he used to withdraw in the western desert of Egypt apparently owed its name to him: he was mentioned as one of the comrades-in-arms of 'Amr b. al-'Aṣ in the conquest of the latter country.<sup>56</sup> In default of one of the illustrations of Islam listed by Ashhab, this highly honourable individual is renowned solely for featuring in a judicio-historical *ḥadīth* alongside 'Amr who contradicts him. The opinion which 'Amr is credited with defending, which thus benefits, so it is hoped, from his considerable prestige, conforms to the solution preferred by orthodoxy; it is this which prevails, it seems, in the eyes of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam or of his informants.

2. – The other episode, the one relating to prayer, is associated with the first serious campaigner in Tunisia, 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd. "One day in Ifriqiya he was leading the public prayer of sunset (*maghrib*). He had prayed two *rak'a*, when a muffled and obscure sound was heard in the mosque. The faithful, startled, believed that their enemies had arrived, and Ibn Sa'd interrupted the prayer. Then, seeing that nothing was happening, he preached to those present and added: This prayer has been curtailed. He gave the order to the muezzin to make a second call, then he restarted the prayer (*a'ādahā*)" (p. 45).<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Torrey edition, pp. 94, 286–7; Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-Ghaba*, V, 54; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, III, 599, n° 8934.

<sup>57</sup> This text is reprised by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam in his final collection of *ḥadīth*-s, ed. Torrey, p. 263. It is immediately preceded by another version which differs from it in a part of the

At first sight, it might be tempting to associate this text with the question of the prayer of fear (*ṣalāt al-khawf*); but neither the special ritual for this prayer, in which the faithful pray in relays while some stand guard, nor the prior condition of fear of the enemy, are present in our account: there is a surprise in the middle of the prayer which is communal and shared by all. What precisely is signified by this incident and by the attitude attributed to 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd?

The end of the episode suggests the explanation: what is at issue here is the resumption of an interrupted prayer. The *fuqahā'*, in fact, were not at all in agreement in [135] determining, if and when it took place, after an interruption of the ritual prayer, whether to repeat it in its entirety (*i'āda*) or to resume it (*binā'*) at the point of interruption, or furthermore to add to this simple resumption a compensatory prostration. The principal debate was focused on *i'āda* and *binā'*, and the divergent solutions, according to the various rites, also differed in terms of the causes and the modalities of the interruption. For Mālik, speaking, even intentionally, in the course of the prayer, did not annul it if it was necessary to speak in the interests of the prayer, for example to warn the *imām* that he was making a mistake; otherwise, voluntary interruption had the effect of annulment. Al-Awzā'ī was content with a praiseworthy motive unconnected with the prayer itself, such as warning a blind person or setting someone who had strayed on the right path.<sup>58</sup>

In the present case, 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd, functioning as *imām* had, we are told, "interrupted the prayer", without any doubt as to the propriety, not only of stopping the prayer, but also of using voluntary gestures and words which destroyed its continuity. The decision that he subsequently took to start the whole prayer again rather than confining himself to the third obligatory *rak'a* for the *maghrib*, conformed to the dominant opinion within orthodoxy and to the Mālikite position, in opposition to the rite of al-Awzā'ī. It is not irrelevant that the one who informed Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam of this episode was his own father, head of the Mālikite school in Egypt after Ashhab.<sup>59</sup>

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*isnād*, in a few slight variants of form, and most of all in the absence of any mention of the *maghrib* and of the *rak'a*.

<sup>58</sup> Dimashqī, *Raḥmat al-Umma*, p. 39. See also *Mudawwana*, I, 105, and Averroes, *Bidāya* I, 173.

<sup>59</sup> It is again his father who relates to him a *ḥadīth* according to which the Prophet, having involuntarily forgotten a *rak'a*, would have returned to the mosque to perform this *rak'a* without recommencing the prayer (p. 95). Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam has numerous other passages about prayer, especially (p. 62) on the interrupted prayer. See also in Abū l-'Arab, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 19/61–2, a *ḥadīth* concerning Ifriqiya on supplementary prayer in Ramaḍān.

3. – With the end of the period of Conquest, there is a change in the character of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s account. It loses much of its *ḥadīth*-related form, and the facts, more recent and more precise, also seem to be more confidently stated. Elements of *fiqh* become very rare. They are no longer one of the principal sources of inspiration.

[136] It could be that the two following passages have a judicio-religious bearing, without it being appropriate to affirm this explicitly: the first concerns a governor of Ifrīqiya who, in 720, had the hands of his bodyguards tattooed – tattooing being forbidden by religion – and perished soon afterwards, a victim of assassination (pp. 109–111); the second recounts the application, in 740, of a Qur’ānic punishment, amputation of a hand and a foot, to a governor of Tlemcen who was suspected of misconduct (p. 121).

The last two instances of this kind which are encountered in our text relate to Berber heretics, the Ṣufriyya Khārijites, around the year 742. “They considered licit,” A. Gateau’s translation tells us, “the captivity of women”, and a little further on it is added that they took captive the “protégés” (*ahla dhimmatihā*) of the Nefzaoua (pp. 133–135). The author manifestly sought to point out here two actions contrary to orthodoxy: he states furthermore, soon afterwards, that the orthodox, conquerors of the Ṣufrites, redressed the wrong suffered by the *dhimmī*-s of the Nefzaoua. In this conditions, what is the licit nature of the “captivity of women” supposed to tell us? The orthodox were perfectly happy to accept this. It should probably be understood that the Ṣufrites “considered licit the use of their captives” in contravention of the rules which, among the orthodox, limited this right. “*Yastahillūna sabya l-nisā*”: *saby* can mean “captives” as well as “captivity” and the expression *istahalla l-nisā* in the sense of “considering licit the use of women” is so current as to create no difficulty.

These solemn allusions to *fiqh* in the last third of our text contrast with the spirit that has animated it hitherto. We shall now without delay retrieve something of this spirit by studying the greatest individual of the Conquest, as presented to us by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam.

#### IV. – ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’ and the Foundation of Kairouan

1. – This redoubtable personality is ‘Uqba b. Nāfi’ al-Fihri, whose story is told us for the period between the years 666 and 683 (pp. 57–71). He is the hero of the conquest of Barbary, outclassing even Mūsā b. Nuṣayr and Ṭāriq, the heroes of the [137] conquest of Spain. For these last two, the relations between them and their relations with the Umayyads, it would be necessary to pay close attention to the position taken by our author: the Traditions that were

current were for Mūsā, or against Mūsā, and from the attitude taken towards him by such or such a historian it is possible to deduce some of his own tendencies or the tendencies of his sources. In the present study, which deals essentially with North Africa, we shall leave this task to one side.<sup>60</sup>

The exact date of the birth of 'Uqba b. Nāfi' remains unknown: he belongs to the generation of the first "successors" or *tābi'ūn*. This Qurayshite of ardent will, conqueror and converter, founder of the great Arab-Muslim city of Kairouan and of its mosque, subsequently falling as a martyr to Islam, is a great figure made still greater by legend. "You are perhaps," it was said to him one day, "one of those who will enter Paradise fully prepared" (p. 69). For a great many Muslims he represented the realisation of the ideal: it was easy for them to add to his exploits and enlarge his conquests, to accentuate the religious character of his work with the miraculous and with supernatural predestination. This blend of warlike heroism, of religious propaganda and wonders – is it not enough to transform a vague and distant historical basis into a work of epic proportions, a literary creation which though moving, is all too often far removed from the truth? The epic element is certainly there in the form, and the first part of the saga of 'Uqba, that which shows him subjugating "one after the other" the diverse regions of southern Tripolitania, is not unworthy – in its succinct and powerful dialogue, rapid action, the brutal demise of the hero soberly recounted, the systematic repetitions and their symmetry – to be put alongside other, better known, passages of epic.

It has been stated above that the conquest of Fezzan was probably not the action of 'Uqba. Doubt is legitimate for the majority of operations attributed to him in southern Tripolitania. Similarly we have the right to be sceptical about [138] the terminal point of the great expedition described in the third and final part of his saga, which was to end with his death. He is seen there, returning to North Africa after falling into disfavour, dragging behind him in chains the governor who had temporarily replaced him, and setting out on an adventurous raid, in a single stage, as far as the Ocean. "Arriving on the shores of the sea, 'Uqba drove his horse forward until the water lapped his breast. 'My God,' he said, 'you are my witness: I can go no further, but if I found a way forward, I would ride on'" (p. 69). On the return journey, to the south of Aures, near Tahudha, he was attacked by Berbers and died in combat; his tomb, in the oasis which bears his name, is still venerated today.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam sometimes shows himself less than benevolent towards Mūsā and his line, but this attitude is not systematic in his work; perhaps it should be associated with a certain sympathy that he seems to feel for the Kalbites (see below).

<sup>61</sup> On the sanctuary of "Sidi Okba" see the recent study by G. Marcais published in the *Annales Institut Etudes Orientales d'Alger*, vol. V, pp. 1–15.

The folkloric theme is evident in the image of the horseman who can be stopped only by the sea, and replicas of this are to be found elsewhere. To attribute to a famous hero conquests and far-flung expeditions is to enhance his renown, but it is also to associate with his prestige, and give a portion of his *baraka* to, whichever territory bears witness to his achievements. If 'Uqba's long-range raid may be regarded as authentic, it is reasonable, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to limit it to central Algeria; perhaps, at the most, it might have reached as far as what is now Orania, and the valley of the Chelif.

2. – The central panel of the triptych constituting the epic of 'Uqba is occupied by the foundation of Kairouan: is this not in the eyes of Muslims his greatest work, which perpetuates his memory in the most magnificent manner?

We do not at the moment have any proof in hand which would qualify us to declare decisively for or against the historical character of this foundation. Tradition appears constant, and it could well be that Kairouan was born at around this time.<sup>62</sup> But there is also sometimes mention of a previous Kairouan, or in addition a concurrent and neighbouring city with an almost identical name, of Berber consonance: [139] Tikarawān; and there are some on the other hand who attribute the foundation of Kairouan to a homonym of our hero, 'Uqba b. 'Amir, a Companion of the Prophet, while 'Uqba b. Nāfi' was only a *tābi'*: themes of uncertainty which add to the doubt created by the legendary allure of the account of the foundation. However, the substitution of 'Uqba b. 'Amir for 'Uqba b. Nāfi', which nothing seems to substantiate on the historical level, would be explained by the desire to involve a Companion of the Prophet, even to the detriment of an illustrious *tābi'*. While recording a minor hesitation, it is reasonable to assume, on a provisional basis, that the founder of Kairouan was indeed 'Uqba b. Nāfi'.

As in other passages, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam presents two versions in immediate succession (pp. 61–63). The first is a little shorter than the second, and lacks an *isnād*. On arriving at the site, “a valley covered with trees and bushes, a veritable lair of ferocious beasts, wild animals and reptiles, 'Uqba cried: Inhabitants of the valley, leave these places – may God have mercy on you! – for we are settling here. On three successive days (*thalāthata ayyāmin*) he uttered this proclamation. Then, without exception, all the ferocious beasts, all the wild animals, all the reptiles, moved out. He had the place cleaned up and divided it into lots. Then, having populated the town, he planted his spear there and said: Here is your Kairouan.”

<sup>62</sup> On the site and the foundation of Kairouan, see J. Despois, *La Tunisie Orientale, Sahel et Basse Steppe*, Paris 1940, pp. 164–6, and H.H. Abdulwahab, in *Revue Tunisienne*, 1940, pp. 51–3.

The second version, which supposedly dates back to al-Layth b. Sa'd, starts with 'Uqba spending the night on the site. "In the morning, standing at the entrance to the valley, he cried: Inhabitants of the valley, go, for we are settling here. He said this three times (*thalātha marrātin*). And creeping serpents, scorpions and other animals, of unknown species, left the place. The people, standing, watched this exodus from the morning to the time when the sun became uncomfortable for them and when they did not see any more of these beasts; then they settled in the valley. Al-Layth adds: Ziyād b. al-Ajlān has told me that, during the forty years which followed this event, the people have been unable to find a single snake or scorpion, not even for a bounty of a thousand dinars".<sup>63</sup>

[140] This last version recurs in the *Ṭabaqāt* of Abū l-'Arab.<sup>64</sup> It is preceded by a similar version, which makes no mention of the repetition of the call but concludes with the words: "We shall kill all those that we find there." Al-Balādhurī has no direct appeal to the beasts but an invocation from 'Uqba to God; and he subsequently shows the wild animals leaving and taking their young with them.<sup>65</sup> Other versions, in the later texts, also have this feature, and furthermore some of them declare that the Berbers were converted to Islam by this spectacle, or go further and reinforce 'Uqba's proclamation by the express mention of Companions of the Prophet who were present, or rather by their discreet intervention.<sup>66</sup> According to Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, 'Uqba alone was in charge and he deserves the credit. But what is it that separates one of these two versions from the other?

In the process of the expulsion of the savage beasts, a difference is noted: the warning is given, sometimes on three successive days, sometimes three times consecutively in one day. Does this discrepancy have any significance? We propose to convince ourselves of this by consulting works of *ḥadīth* and of *fiqh*.

There exist numerous religious Traditions concerning the killing of snakes, its restricted licitness, its conditions. These generally deal with the snakes which are found within the houses of Medina. Two species considered particularly dangerous could be killed on the spot: to the others, a formal legal injunction should be addressed, calling upon them to leave, since they could be "Muslim jinns": only if they resisted the ritual abjuration, thus

<sup>63</sup> The translation by A. Gateau has been modified on several points of detail.

<sup>64</sup> Abū l-'Arab, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 8-9/21-5.

<sup>65</sup> Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, p. 228/358-9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, tr. Fagnan, Algiers 1901, I, 15; Ibn al-Athīr, *Annales du Maghreb et de l'Espagne*, tr. Fagnan, Algiers 1901, p. 19; al-Nuwayrī, *Historia de los musulmanes de España y Africa*, ed.-tr. Gaspar Remiro, Vol. II, Granada 1919, pp. 11-12; Ibn Nāǧī, *Ma'ālim al-Imān*, I, 8.

demonstrating their impiety or their satanic nature, was their killing authorised. Al-Layth b. Sa'd, supporter of one of the above-mentioned versions of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, is among the transmitters of these *ḥadīth*-s, also Mālik in his [141] *Muwatta'*.<sup>67</sup> The injunction to the snakes, the Traditions tell us, should be done "on three occasions" (*thalāthan*), unclear terminology which has given rise to discussion: is this "three times" (*thalātha marrātin*), one at each appearance of the reptile, or the three consecutively, or "three successive days" (*thalāthata ayyāmin*)? This last interpretation is explicit *apud* Mālik, who introduces it into the text of one of his *ḥadīth*-s; it also finally prevailed in his rite, for example in the writings of the commentators on the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd, where *thalāthan* is prudently used.<sup>68</sup> But does this prudence, in the work of a classical author of the Tenth Century, not prove that among the first Mālikites the issue was controversial? How is it possible now to fail to see the link which unites in this debate our two versions and the variant which we have noted? Each of the two solutions, with no decision being made between them, is represented here.

There remain however two elements of disharmony between our account and the Traditions relating to the snakes of Medina. Many scholars accept that the rules imposed by the latter are valid, at least in terms of the practice recommended, outside Medina, but only in houses, not in the countryside or in the desert. On the other hand, these Traditions only concern snakes, and not all the species of wild animals expelled by 'Uqba.

Without doubt, in fact, the conjunction between the legend of 'Uqba and the Medinan *ḥadīth*-s is the result of a secondary development, the work of religious scholars. The "three day" version, from this point of view, appears suspect. The figure of the conqueror could at an early stage have given rise to accounts of supernatural powers or of miracles (*karāmāt*) [142] of a type which is, in the final analysis, quite banal.<sup>69</sup> Somewhere in southern Tripolitania, where people are dying of thirst, 'Uqba recites a prayer of two *rak'a*, then he

<sup>67</sup> Mālik, *Muwatta'* ed. cit., VII, 300-2; Ubbi, *Ikmāl* (commentary on Muslim), ed. Cairo, 1328, H., VI. 50-3.

<sup>68</sup> Zarrūq and Ibn Nājī, *Commentaires sur la Risāla d'Ibn Abī Zaid*, ed. Cairo 1914, II, 418; Abū l-Ḥasan, *Commentaire sur la Risāla d'Ibn Abī Zaid*, 4th ed. Cairo 1930, II, 396. In the translation of the *Risāla*, Fagnan accordingly writes: "three different days", p. 267; and *ibid*, n. 1, he attaches to this precept the account of the foundation of Kairouan: this justified, but discreet point seems to have remained unnoticed. — There would have been a case for tracing this legendary theme in the work of the Ibādite Khārijites of North Africa; they adopted it with reference to the foundation of Tahert; cf. *Chronique d'Abou Zakaria*, tr. Masqueray, Algiers 1878, p. 50.

<sup>69</sup> The term *karāmāt*, familiar to hagiography, is also found, with reference to 'Uqba b. Nāfi', in *Ma'ālim al-Imān*, loc. cit.

invokes God; his horse, scraping the ground with his hooves, uncovers a subterranean water-course, which is subsequently reached through *seventy* excavations (p. 61). At another time, it is his imprecation against a rival that is realised (pp. 65–67). Is it very surprising that this hero beloved of God should be given the power to expel wild beasts,<sup>70</sup> when the object is to make a place suitable for the construction of a Muslim city and a mosque?<sup>71</sup> Then, aided by the similitude despite certain persistent differences, the *fuqahā'* would associate this episode to Medinan *ḥadīth*-s, deforming it according to need in some details and making it serve, for the question of “three times” or “three days”, to illustrate one or other of their solutions.

## V. – Orthodox, Umayyad, Arab and Berber Caliphs

1. – The traditionist masters of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam liked to put into the scene, wherever possible, individuals who were closely associated with the Prophet<sup>72</sup> or with his very first successors. The latter themselves could not be absent from accounts relating to the Conquest. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, “the Veracious”, who could not be held to have been involved in these events, is nevertheless evoked in a flattering manner with reference to his grandson Ibn al-Zubayr (p. 47). 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb forbids, [143] during his lifetime, an attack on Ifrīqiya as such, after the seizure of Tripoli (p. 37). On the other hand, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān incites the Muslims to launch an assault on what is now Tunisia (p. 39). As for the silence on the subject of 'Alī, whom others found ways of introducing into the tapestry of these events, it is assumed that the orthodox had no reason to falsify historical truth in his favour.<sup>73</sup>

The attitude lent to 'Umar could have as its primary motive the desire, widely spread at this time, to attribute a conscious and deliberate policy to

<sup>70</sup> Balādhurī's version, which speaks of an invocation to God and not of a summons to the beasts, harmonises more closely with two prior incidents. It is hard however to take the view that it represents the primary state of the legend: it would seem rather to be an aesthetically emended edition.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Balādhurī has collected, pp. 229/360, an Ifrīqiyan version about a dream which would have shown 'Uqba the correct position for the minaret. The blessing of the town by 'Uqba is recounted by several authors, in particular Abū l-'Arab, *Tabaqāt*, p. 8/20–1.

<sup>72</sup> In relation to a Tradition which placed in year 27 of the Hegira (647–8) the date of the expedition of 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd against Ifrīqiya, it was recalled that the same year, according to the imam Mālik, saw the death of Ḥafṣa, wife of the Prophet (p. 51).

<sup>73</sup> The expression *mā maqalat'aynī al-mā'u* does not signify “as long as my eyes can be moistened by tears” as it has been translated (p. 37) but “as long as a liquid will moisten my eyes”, in other words, “as long as I shall be alive”; it is a synonym of “*mā baqītu*” which occurs a little earlier.



individuals who in reality did no more than, on one occasion, satisfy the conjunctures of the moment. If the Arabs could not, for a certain period of time, after the lightning-conquest of Egypt and victorious forays as far as Tripoli, push on further – what could be more natural? But it was tempting to explain this temporary halt in the middle of a period of expansion in terms of the very conceptions of the supreme leader. An excellent opportunity too to put in his mouth certain remarks hostile to North Africa which must have been coined rather later and spread by Arab warriors having to confront the determined resistance of the Berbers. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam has retained the play on words *Ifriqiya al-mufarriqa* (“the land which disperses”) and also the formula “Ifriqiya tricks the one who lets himself be tricked by her” (*ghādiratu maghdūrīn bihā*).<sup>74</sup>

It was indeed during the reign of ‘Uthmān, apparently, that the first great Arab raid against Tunisia took place. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d, who led it, had to be acquainted with the internal situation of the country which was propitious for a foreign intervention. We are not necessarily convinced that ‘Uthmān approved this raid in advance, still less helped to organise it; it could be that some gave him the credit for this after the event; there is something suspicious about the very insistence on the part of [144] certain authors, al-Wāqidī for example,<sup>75</sup> on showing him busily manoeuvring to obtain the support of his entourage for the idea of the expedition. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam has maintained this merit for ‘Uthmān, but with discretion. He retains the essential account of al-Wāqidī, on the caliph’s invitation, after consultation with prominent Medinans,<sup>76</sup> to attack Ifriqiya, but he declares formally that there was a prior request for authorisation (*istiṭhān*) on the part of ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d: an example of *istiḍhān* addressed by the chief of the army to the sovereign, as recommended by the *fuqahā* for new military expeditions.

If perhaps Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, as a concession to the anti-Umayyad tendency of the ‘Abbāsid jurists, was not tempted to magnify ‘Uthmān unduly, it was not his intention to reduce his prestige to a level too low: his own family was associated, by links of clienthood, to a freedman of this caliph;<sup>77</sup> and, a

<sup>74</sup> It is repeated at a much later stage, ed. Torrey, p. 315.

<sup>75</sup> *Apud* Abū l-‘Arab, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 12/36 and f. We may recall that the Egyptians had little regard for ‘Uthmān until al-Layth b. Sa’d (see subsequently, pp. 48–49) circulated among them *ḥadīth*-s regarding the merits of this caliph; cf. al-Damīrī, quoted by Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, II, 140.

<sup>76</sup> A. Gateau did not translate “*ba’dā l-mashūratī minhu fī dhālika*” which means “after consultation on his part about this subject”. The practice of “taking counsel” or “*mashūra*” by the prince or the judge is recommended by orthodoxy.

<sup>77</sup> Khazraji, *Khulāṣa*, ed. Cairo 1322 H., cited by A. Gateau, p. 10.

little further on in his account, he was to accord him a sympathetic role, then refer on two occasions to his assassination, an emotive and pious theme, to which orthodoxy did not remain insensitive.

2. – The anti-Umayyad attitude is much more clearly in evidence as regards the very dynasty of caliphs of Damascus and their enemies. Not yet, however, as regards the Sufyānid sovereigns: Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān even gives, as we have noted, an orthodox solution of law (p. 55). But the Marwānids are less well treated, beginning with their eponymous author Marwān b. al-Ḥakam.

A) A fairly long episode, which confirms the prediction of the assassination of 'Uthmān and the accession of Marwān to power [145] "in the Holy Land" (the prediction is made to the latter individual in a convent) presents it as a lamentable day: no doubt he is overwhelmed by the prediction of the fate which awaits his relative and friend currently on the throne, but he is also a wretched figure, learning that he himself is called upon to reign; the Christian who reveals to him his elevated future despises his weakness and lashes him with his contempt (p. 49). And this scene is all the more instructive in that a modern historian has felt able to stress, insistently, the energy and decisive spirit of Marwān, even before his caliphate.<sup>78</sup>

B) His son and successor 'Abd al-Malik was involved, before becoming caliph, with the affair of the taking of Jalūlā, in the course of a campaign led by Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam relates that the defensive walls of the city collapsed suddenly, as 'Abd al-Malik was beating a retreat following a fruitless siege: the Muslims then had no difficulty taking possession of the place and sacking it. Another version, immediately after, attributes the same adventure to Ibn Ḥudayj personally (p. 55).

These two versions recur textually in the work of a more recent author, the Spanish geographer al-Bakrī; but they are followed here by a complementary episode, which seems ancient, and could be the nucleus of this story, or even its genuine key.<sup>79</sup> When, in the aftermath of this campaign, 'Abd al-Malik had occasion to complain of a lack of respect on the part of Ibn Ḥudayj, a known

<sup>78</sup> Lammens, in *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, 1926, p. 28. The theme of prophecy by a Christian monk or *rāhib* is quite widespread in the early times of Islam. But our account, put strangely into the mouth of Marwān himself, who here appears scorned, is surely a pejorative distortion of the edifying scene in which a pious person laments his accession to power and declares himself unworthy of it. A parallel attitude has decidedly Christian associations, cf. Becker, *Islamstudien*, Leipzig 1924, I. 410.

<sup>79</sup> Bakrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–3. See also Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, I, 10–12, for variants on this account.

traditionist, Ḥanash al-Ṣanʿānī<sup>80</sup> who was then in the army, predicted his accession to the caliphate. Later, this Ḥanash was taken prisoner when he was fighting for Ibn al-Zubayr, and sent to the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik. “Since it is you,” the latter said to him, “who predicted that I would succeed [146] to the throne, why have you left me to follow Ibn al-Zubayr?” “Because I saw him working to merit the favour of God, whereas you directed your efforts towards the good things of this world”, replied the warrior, a man of religion.

It is hard to understand why Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, if he knew this anti-Umayyad tradition, would omit this from his account, at the risk of enfeebling it. Did he perhaps recoil from a second prediction of accession to the throne, having already dealt at some length with the one relating to the father? Perhaps he reckoned that the other features hostile to the Umayyads – to be found here and there in his work – were sufficient.

C) One of these features, which recurs on a number of pages, is greed, especially manifest in terms of the booty emanating from conquests. As we have already seen, under ʿUthmān, Marwān one day took possession of an entire fifth (p.57). His son ʿAbd al-Malik, on coming to power “delighted in the conquests and the booty” achieved by Ḥassān b. al-Nuʿmān; and his other son, ʿAbd al-Azīz, governor of Egypt, took control of the trafficking of captives, including some beautiful Berber girl-slaves, who were a part of this booty (p. 77). Under the reign of al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, it was again a brother of the caliph, Sulaymān, who tried, through trickery, to have “the booty and the presents” brought by Mūsa b. Nuṣayr and finally, after the death of his brother, obtained them (p. 101).

D) Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam could not pass over in silence the nomination as governor of Ifrīqiya, in 718, under ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz, of the pious Ismāʿīl b. ʿUbayd Allāh, a traditionist of Damascus.<sup>81</sup> “He was of exemplary conduct, and under his administration, there was barely a single Berber who did not accept conversion to Islam” (p. 107). But our author does not specify, as was to be done a century later by Abū l-ʿArab, that this nomination was part of a plan on the part of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Azīz to complete the islamisation of Ifrīqiya: the sending of a mission of *tābiʿūn* expressly charged with the propagation of the faith.<sup>82</sup> [147] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, apparently, had no reason to diminish the religious glory of this Umayyad caliph, the only one to find favour in the eyes of

<sup>80</sup> See, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 57, n. 2. He is mentioned several times by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam.

<sup>81</sup> See, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 63, n. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Abū l-ʿArab, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–1/ 62–5. See also Ibn ʿIdhārī, *Bayān*, I, 44.

all the orthodox: in addition, was it not one of his closest relatives who wrote a *Sīrat 'Umar* b. 'Abd al-Azīz, which has survived into the present?<sup>83</sup> Was the Tradition representing the work of Ismā'īl b. 'Ubayd Allāh and of other men of religion, his contemporaries, as approved by the sovereign, only current, in the Ninth Century, in Ifrīqiya, or was it later than the time of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam?

E) The anti-Umayyad vein makes itself felt, here as in other works reflecting the Tradition of Medina or emanating from pro-Abbāsid circles, in the exaltation of persons hostile to the caliphs of Damascus, and before all others the caliph of Mecca 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam has noted, without accepting responsibility for it, the assertion that Ibn al-Zubayr had killed with his own hand, in Tunisia, the *patricus* Gregory in the course of the raid of 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd (p. 39).<sup>84</sup> But it is above all as a messenger of victory, sent by 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd to the caliph 'Uthmān, that Ibn al-Zubayr is indulgently and effusively feted: a master of improvised oratory, he enchants his audience, and his talent earns him on the part of his own father a compliment which refers to the virtues of his mother<sup>85</sup> and those of his maternal grandfather, the caliph Abū Bakr (p. 47).

Perhaps, having regard to the wide diffusion of the Zubayrid legend in the works of a number of writers and historians, it may be legitimately supposed that our text did not exploit it inordinately.

F) In the conquest of North Africa, a fairly large part is accorded to a valiant general, Zuhayr b. Qays al-Balawī,<sup>86</sup> given as a lieutenant of 'Uqba b. Nāfi', [148] then as the victor over the great Berber chieftain Kusayla (pp. 57, 69–73). The account of this last exploit deserves special attention.

The Muslims had just heard that the Byzantines had landed troops in Cyrenaica; before them, Ibn al-Naṣrānī, whom we have mentioned previously, had fled. The Umayyad 'Abd al-Azīz b. Marwān, governor of Egypt, decided to send Zuhayr to restore the situation, but an altercation erupted between them with regard to a certain Jandal b. Ṣakhr, of the tribe of Ṣadif, "a coarse and

<sup>83</sup> Cairo edition, 1927; the sending of a propaganda mission to Ifrīqiya is not mentioned there.

<sup>84</sup> See on this subject, with a great wealth of detail, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ed. Cairo, VI, 56–7, Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān*, I, 5–8, and other late works.

<sup>85</sup> Asmā', sister of 'A'isha: *ḥadīth*-s relate that the Prophet preached her eulogy and promised her, as reward for a goodwill gesture, "two girdles" in Paradise.

<sup>86</sup> See, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 56, n. 3, where traditional data and references are given.

hard man”,<sup>87</sup> whom the governor wanted to place alongside Zuhayr. “Now ‘Abd al-Azīz bore a grudge against Zuhayr b. Qays, who had fought him when his father Marwān b al-Ḥakam had sent him in the direction of Aila before his entry into Egypt. “I have always known you, Zuhayr,” he told him, “as a wicked and tyrannical man.” “Son of Laylā,” replied Zuhayr, “I did not think that a man who collected the revelations of God to Muḥammad before your father and mother had even met was capable of being coarse and hard. No, it is not so! I shall go, but I pray God not to bring me back to you!” Near Derna, accompanied by only seventy warriors, Zuhayr would fall, with all of his entourage, as a martyr (p. 79).<sup>88</sup>

Could it be the case that this Muslim hero of ancient times was not regarded with much sympathy by our author and his mentors, and was not glorified by them, on account of his unfriendly relationship with the Marwānids, which Tradition took pleasure in underlining?

3. – By way of conclusion, it is not impossible, exercising all necessary prudence to define the attitude of Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam [149] or of his informants vis-à-vis certain categories of human beings.

A) As regards the Arab tribes, Quraysh retains in his eyes a natural primacy. He himself bears in his name the ethnic qualification of “Qurashī”, although this is only through right of clienthood. His central hero, ‘Uqba b. Nāfi‘ al-Fihri, is Qurayshite, and how indignant is he to see the latter deprived of the governorship of Ifriqiya to have named in his place a “slave (‘abd) of the Anṣār”, in fact already a “freedman (*mawla*)” (p. 65).<sup>89</sup>

The preference attributed to Qurayshites for senior positions of this kind is also underlined in a saying of the Umayyad caliph Yazid b. ‘Abd al-Malik:

<sup>87</sup> Are there not grounds for suspicion in the very name of this individual? It is strange that “Rock, son of Boulder” is described as a “coarse and hard man”, from a tribe whose name is also from a root signifying “hard”.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam adds that, in his time, the location of their tombs was known. Al-Balādhurī specifies, p. 229/360, that they are called “the Tombs of the Martyrs” (*Qubūr al-Shuhadā’*). This is an example of those toponyms or geographical names of which the historical or pseudo-historical explanation is to be found in accounts of the Conquest; of this type, we have in the work of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, for Barbary: *Bīr al-Kāhina*, *Mā’ Faras*, *Nahr al-Balā’*, *Qal’at Busr*, *Qusūr Ḥassān* (pp. 61, 73, 75, 85).

<sup>89</sup> In reference to the slave or freedman, governor of the province, there is an episode that should be noted, recorded by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (p. 81): a slave called Talīd – a characteristic name! – being governor of the Pentapolis under the Umayyads, the people were chagrined at having for *imām* a person of servile status: once freed, he could continue as head of the province. There is here, evidently, another thesis of *fiqh*.

but here the consideration of religious merits already appears: a Qurayshite,<sup>90</sup> known furthermore as a traditionalist, a good soldier and seafarer, having been dismissed, the caliph has to confirm the nomination of a descendant of the Anṣār, virtuous and versed in the religious sciences, himself a pioneer of the holy war at sea (pp. 111–113).

B) In reference to the Tunisian expedition of 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd, our author names only three tribes, who would have supplied, out of a total of twenty thousand men, contingents regarded as important: six hundred for one of them, seven hundred for each of the other two. These are the Mahra, and two factions of the Azd: the Ghanth and the Mayda'ān (p. 41). It is curious that these names, as A. Gateau asserts (note 30) do not recur in the list supplied by Abū l-'Arab on the authority of al-Wāqidi.<sup>91</sup> There is a remark here which has not yet [150] been made but which should be: the eight tribes cited by Abū l-'Arab were indigenous to northern Arabia, while the Mahra and the Azd were Arabs from the South.

Abū l-'Arab was a Tamīmīte: he would not be inclined to extol the hereditary enemies of the Tamīm. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam or one of his teachers would have been drawn, on the other hand, to glorify the Arabs of the South. The informant cited for the Tradition in question, Ibn Lahī'a, had been a pupil of the traditionalist Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb, client of the Azd;<sup>92</sup> should we be looking in this direction? Or could there have been broader politico-religious reasons? Previously, our author had reported another statement, following the lead of the same Ibn Lahī'a: "The Mahra kill and are not killed".<sup>93</sup> Further on, he was perhaps to show a little more goodwill towards the Kalbites than towards the Qaysites, their rivals of northern origin;<sup>94</sup> but the touch is barely perceptible, and nothing definitive should be deduced from it.

C) A Yemenite tribe of the South, the Madhḥij, receives honourable mention following the account of the death of Zuhayr b. Qays. It is a member of this tribe who avenges the hero, hurling himself with seven hundred comrades-in-arms against the Byzantines and put them to flight (p. 81).

Other historians do not have this feature. Why was Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam intent on recounting this exploit by a member of the Madhḥij? He himself had

<sup>90</sup> He was called al-Mughīra b. Abī Burda; see, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 68, n. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Abū l-'Arab, *op. cit.* pp. 14/46–7. The tribes that he names are the following: Muzayna, B. Dhū'ayl, Ḍamra, Ghifār, 'Abd Manāt, Ghaṭafān, Fazāra, Murr.

<sup>92</sup> Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 5, n. 3 and p. 6, n. 1.

<sup>93</sup> Torrey edition, pp. 76–7.

<sup>94</sup> For example, pp. 113–119. See further, pp. 125 and 137, the difference in character between two governors of Ifrīqiya, the Qaysite Kulthūm and the Kalbite Ḥanzala.

collected, this time still relying on Ibn Lahī'a, the following *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, which was current in his Mālikite Egyptian milieu: "The majority of tribes, in Paradise, will be Madhhij".<sup>95</sup> This flattering reputation could be the real motive for attributing [151] to one of the Madhhij an act of courage making amends for the death of a martyr.<sup>96</sup>

D) A word, finally, on the Berbers and Arabs in general. Our author is somewhat severe towards the former. Without doubt he recognises their valour, and sometimes their talent for war, in spite of their rudimentary equipment and armament (p. 125, quite remarkable in this context); they are above all very good infantrymen: their chief, Kusayla, tough and stubborn, is by no means belittled in his account, and the portrait that he paints of the famous Kāhina is not without grandeur (p. 75). An epic convention perhaps: homage to the vanquished as well as to the military virtue of their conquerors.

Man of religion that he is, he insists in general that the subjugated Berbers should be treated no worse than Islam requires. But he cannot ignore their obstinacy in the struggle against the faithful, nor their incessant heresies from the time of their mass conversion. He knows their coarseness, their uncouthness: in the conquest of Spain, where they distinguish themselves by their gallantry in the ranks of the Muslim army, they are also noted for their savagery in the business of pillage: "When they happened to discover carpets inlaid with gold thread, being unable to carry them off, they cut them into two with an axe" (p. 95). And Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam did not omit, towards the end of his book, to reproduce one of those anti-Berber *ḥadīth*-s which for a long time was current across Islam: "Of the seventy turpitudes, the Berbers have sixty-nine of them, the jinns and the human race only one."<sup>97</sup>

[152] E) As for the Arabs and for their prestige, we re-read, in the epic of 'Uqba b. Nāfi', the account of his triumphant campaign in southern

<sup>95</sup> Torrey edition, p. 126. See also Ibn Wahb, *al-Jāmi'*, ed. David-Weill, Cairo 1939-41, I, 1, and II, 1. The majority of the Madhhij had been partisans of 'Alī against Mu'āwiya; Lammens, in *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, 1907, p. 10, n. 8.

<sup>96</sup> It is probably in the same order of ideas that the explanation would be found for another episode: that of the man of the Banū Mudlij who, accompanied by seven comrades-in-arms, with a cry of "*Allahu akbar*", brought about the fall of Tripoli (pp. 33-5). No doubt it is not unintentionally that Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam underlines the Medinan quality (*min ahli l-Madīna*) of an individual who reminds the caliph of Damascus, about to disregard it, of the Qur'ānic rule of the fifth to be levied on the booty (p. 101). Medina is favoured by people adhering to the tradition of the Prophet and by the *fuqahā'* of the school of Mālik.

<sup>97</sup> Torrey edition, p. 287. The Berbers themselves, Islamised and domiciled in cities, were for a long time ashamed of their origins: see W. Marçais, in *Annales Institut Etudes Orientales d'Alger*, vol. IV, p. 16. It was only later, in reaction, that a start was made in writing of the "glorious titles" (*mafākhīr*) of the Berbers.

Tripolitania. On three occasions he is seen overpowering a chieftain and humiliating him physically; in the first case, and in the third, he even mutilates the vanquished, either the ear or the finger; and when the victim complains over this apparently unjustified treatment, he replies each time: "This will serve you as a lesson and remove from you the desire to make war upon the Arabs" (pp. 57–9). Is it the ancient Bedouin and Arab pride that is resurgent here, in barbarous and hardly Muslim actions, accredited to the most Muslim of the heroes of the Conquest, for the greater glory of the conquerors and the exaltation of their epic?

### Summary and Conclusions

There are, in the part of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's book which deals with the Conquest of North Africa – and something of an excursus into Spain – a certain number of passages where the precise significance can only be penetrated with the aid of *fiqh*. They are fully explained only through consideration of judicio-religious problems, which are themselves without any doubt, all too often, not so much the outcome of a given historical situation, but the *raison d'être* or the point of departure of this or that account. Thus, the *ḥadīth* is not only an exterior form, it also affects the content: Tradition is simultaneously judicial and historical (or pseudo-historical), like many of its congeners in classical collections of *ḥadīth*-s. The narration, more fictive than true, suspect at the very least, is only there to support with memorable examples, destined to constitute authority – almost jurisprudential authority we could say – certain solutions of *fiqh*.

In respect of individuals and groups, the actions and the attitudes which our author attributes to them, it is also appropriate to allocate a major role to legend and to prejudices. And here furthermore the religious motif intervenes. Or, to express it more accurately, it is [153] in the politico-religious conceptions of a determinate milieu that we should search for the key to more than one adventure, to more than one adulatory or disapproving trait. This milieu is essentially that of the traditionists and *fuqahā'* of Egypt, of the time or of the school of Mālik, in the second half of the Eighth Century and throughout the following century. They are the ones who laid on the shoulders of individuals of the earliest times of Islam, involved with the great events of the Conquest, the burden of the legal solutions which they championed.

What is, in these circumstances, the personal responsibility of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam?



First of all, and this is undeniable, he was himself interested in the “science of Traditions”, outside history as well as in relation to his subject, and he paid particular attention to certain problems of *fiqh*. This is proved by the *ḥadīth*-s which he has assembled at the end of his book, the Traditions which he presents here and there on questions relating to Prayer, and the numerous pages which he devotes, in regard to Egypt, to recounting all the Traditions concerning the origins of its territorial and fiscal status in Islam. Many of the *ḥadīth*-s which we have noted in his account of the Conquest recur in his final collection. In the whole course of his work, he does not separate – or he separates badly – history, not only from the *ḥadīth* genre, but also from the question of *fiqh*.<sup>98</sup>

As for the basics, it is beyond doubt that he received from others, from his traditionist masters whom he cites in each instance, the greater part of the materials, elaborated by them or before them, which he presents to us. His personal intervention is exerted almost exclusively on the arrangement and on the choice; but this is certainly not always without personal reason or without consequence: in general terms, he seems to class himself as a moderate.

It is, evidently, impossible for us to specify, in different cases, the primary source, the probable author of this [154] or that Tradition: there have also been, most often, successive corruptions, adaptations and variations, partial mitigations or embellishments. However there are, in the lists of transmitters supplied by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, at least two names which should, in all probability, be given star-billing: Ibn Lahī’a and al-Layth b. Sa’d, two Egyptians, deceased respectively in 790 and 791, precise contemporaries of Mālik.

These are, at a distance of two generations, the two most significant and frequent sources of our author. Of the first, Ibn Lahī’a, his biographies tell us: “Traditionist of disputed worth... major collector of more or less authentic stories... he seems to have passed on a great number of rejectable traditions”.<sup>99</sup> The second, al-Layth, who passes for a traditionist more worthy of confidence, left the Ḥanafite school to attempt to found a school of his own; he was certainly at the court of Baghdad and in Fustat, and he was the teacher of Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab, founder of the Aghlabid dynasty of Kairouan;<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> A. Gateau notes (p. 13) that none of the works of his brother Muḥammad, a jurist of repute, deals with the Muslim conquests, and he adds: “It is natural that he would not trespass on his brother’s domain.” It cannot be said that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān returned the compliment and refrained from touching law.

<sup>99</sup> See, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 5, n. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn ‘Idhārī, *Bayān*, I, 112.

he wrote a "Book of History" (*Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*) which is today lost.<sup>101</sup> Was this historian-jurist, in some respects a rival to Mālik with whom he was nevertheless in close contact, not responsible, with Ibn Lahī'a, in spite of his better reputation, for a certain number of historical traditions of very dubious authenticity?

A number of their disciples and the close entourage of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam were more resolutely Mālikite in the face of nascent Shāfi'ism,<sup>102</sup> but this was the Mālikism of the first scholars of the rite which was not at all intransigent. Doctrine [155] was not yet as firmly fixed as it was to be after the composition of the *Mudawwana*; the diversity of editions of the *Muwaṭṭa'* clearly illustrates this fluidity. Each scholar can diverge, without too much difficulty, on certain points, from the opinion of the founding *imām*. There was no scandal in sometimes adopting, against the advice of the master, the opinion of an Awzā'i or of a Layth. It is precisely this position of a still quite eclectic Mālikism which the text of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam seems to represent, in matters of *fiqh*. Is it not, furthermore, because the latter is Mālikite, that he is particularly interested in the history of Spain and of Barbary?

Have we in this way removed all historical value from his account of the Conquest (the Conquest as strictly defined, of course)? By giving to this narrative, on almost every page, an interpretation which renders it suspect, we have manifestly aggravated the doubt which is legitimised, in addition to certain contradictions, by the length of time that has elapsed between the events and their narration. From all these data there remain in the final analysis, as certain or as simply probable, only the outlines, a summary sketch in the wake of great events, some proper names, a small number of date-references: enough to give an overall impression of the fairly slow process and the difficulties of the Conquest of eastern Barbary (for that of the West, the matter is very obscure): but we cannot claim any confidence over the details.

Perhaps, after all, it would be reasonable to consider as useful historical documents this anecdote or that remark – inauthentic in their particular form, but expressing reality in their own way. The celebrated meditation on the kernel of the olive, the account of pillages and disputes over the distribution

<sup>101</sup> See, on him, a notice by Ben Cheneb, *op. cit.*, p. 23, n. 2; add to this the reference of the preceding note.

<sup>102</sup> The brother of our 'Abd al-Rahmān, Muḥammad, having assiduously cultivated the *imām* al-Shāfi'i, was subsequently, out of resentment at not being appointed his successor, to oppose his principal Egyptian disciples, and he would revert to a militant Mālikism. This is at least the version which was circulating in Shāfi'ite circles, and which al-Subkī for example, collected in his *Ṭabaquāt*, vol. I, *passim*. In any case, the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, ed. Cairo 1348 H., p. 298, confirms the Shāfi'ism, albeit temporary, of Muḥammad.

of booty, the echo of disappointments occasioned by the first maritime experiments, and a certain number of sparse comments on the Berbers – have more to say, if removed from their illusory contingency, than the most meticulous and most precise of accounts.

Algiers, January 1945

(N.B. In the second edition of his translation, 1947–48, A. Gateau has, in numerous instances, taken note of the above comments.)

## THE BIRTH OF ISLAM IN THE HOLY LAND

*Moshe Sharon*

### I

The formative period of Islam and Islamic civilisation is probably one of the best-documented periods in history. Yet, in spite of the tremendous abundance of traditions relating to every conceivable aspect of the inception and development of early Islam, the questions concerning the nature and circumstances of the appearance of Islam in history are becoming more and more fundamental and difficult to answer.

The fact that Islamic history has had to be reconstructed almost solely on the basis of Islamic tradition, and the fact that this tradition has been shaped and reshaped and contaminated by later political rivalries, theological disputes and social tensions, throws the whole field of Islamic historiography open to debate. The attitude of modern historians of Islam oscillates between complete and almost complete rejection of Islamic tradition as an inadequate source for the reconstruction of early Islamic history, as was done by Crone and Cook in *Hagarism*,<sup>1</sup> and full acceptance of the tradition as an authentic reproduction of Islamic history.

### II

For more than a century modern orientalism has created the tools needed for the appropriate evaluation of Islamic tradition, taking into consideration that, in most cases, this tradition represents the history not as it was, but rather as it should have been, according to the motives and needs of whoever compiled the tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Already in 1916, Snouck Hurgronje, commenting on Paul Casanova's *Mohammad et la Fin du Mond*, published in 1911, summarised the problems facing modern Islamic historical research:

The generations that worked at the biography of the Prophet were too far removed

from his time to have true data or notions; and, moreover, it was not their aim to know the past as it was, but to construct a picture of it as it ought to have been according to their opinion.<sup>3</sup>

Although Snouck Hurgronje's remarks are concerned mainly with the *ṣīrah*, they are valid for Islamic tradition relating to the inception of Islamic civilisation in general.

The extent of the falsification and invention of tradition was put on record by Goldziher, who described the methods of invention and the historical circumstances in which invention took place, as well as the motives behind such invention.<sup>4</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Julius Wellhausen laid the foundations for the critical reading of the historical account along the same principles. He made it clear that information can be gathered even from doubtful statements. Such statements, he remarked, do not necessarily lose their significance, "for invention must have its motive, and motive is all that we require."<sup>5</sup>

The abundance of material of this nature naturally allows for many interpretations. Far from wishing to deny the existence of the Prophet or from discarding Islamic tradition altogether, I wish to offer another interpretation of Islamic historical tradition which deviates from the classical, generally accepted, framework for the birth of Islam. At this stage, I shall follow Paul Casanova's example, namely to present the theory and leave the more detailed proofs for other publications.<sup>6</sup>

### III

The generally accepted picture of the birth of Islam follows the lines of Islamic tradition, in that it accepts the fact that Islam was created in Arabia as a result of Muḥammad's activity in Mecca and Madīnah. From the Arabian Centre it went out to conquer the remnants of the world of antiquity and create a new Empire and a new civilisation.

The fact that at its inception as a political and religious force Islam experienced tremendous convulsions in the form of civil wars which led to permanent schisms in it, has been explained by the assertion that after the death of Muḥammad the authority of his successors in Madīnah was challenged by various groups of Muslims.<sup>7</sup>

In opposition to the theory of the unified beginning, I believe that Islamic tradition tells us a different story. The activity of the Prophet in Arabia, the nature and details of which we can only guess, brought into existence groups or communities of *mu'minūn*, believers first in Arabia and then, after the collapse of both the Sassanians and the Byzantines, also outside Arabia — notably in Iraq, Syria and Mesopotamia, in addition to the community in Madīnah and probably also in North and East Arabia. Each one of these communities had a leader called *amīr al-mu'minīn* — literally, the chief of the faithfuls. This is why it is possible to find few *amīrs* at the same time. The group called *khawārij* had its *amīr al-mu'minīn* as well as the Kufaite community which was led by 'Alī, who came to be called *amīr al-mu'minīn par excellence*,<sup>8</sup> and a group of *mu'minūm* in Yamāmah.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most important groups of *mu'minūn* was led by members of the Umayyad family in Syria, while another, the *mu'minūn* of Madīnah, was led by 'Abdāllah b.

Zubayr. At this early stage, namely during the first half of the seventh century, the term *Islam* did not yet denote a common defined faith for these *mu'minūn* communities. They derived their initial monotheistic inspiration from the Prophet (or perhaps from more than one Prophet), but under the influence of the Jewish, Christian and classical environments they developed along separate lines.

#### IV

The most important development took place in Syria. Following the tradition of the Arab rulers of the Syrian desert, the Ghassānides, the first Umayyad leaders, obtained — most probably from the Byzantine emperor — the title of Phylarch or *malik*, in addition to being the chiefs of the faithfuls, *amīr al-mu'minīn*.<sup>10</sup>

The later, unified Islamic traditions, which on the whole assumed an anti-Umayyad character, stressed the fact that the Umayyads were *mulūk*. The term *malik* in these traditions has a negative connotation: the aim of the enemies of the Umayyad was to show that the Umayyads should not be regarded as legitimate *khulafā'*, or caliphs — substitutes to the Prophet — but rather as temporal “kings”. In reality, however, the traditions preserved an accurate historical message. The title *malik* was the traditional title of the Ghassānid Arab kings of Syria, who are known in Arab legend as *mulūk ash-shām*.<sup>11</sup> At least one of these kings, al-Hārith V, obtained from the Byzantine emperor Justinian in 529 the titles of *patricius* and Phylarch.<sup>12</sup> The Umayyads, who had established themselves in Syria long before the date suggested by tradition for the appearance of Islam, emerged eventually as the heirs to the Ghassānid authority as well as to the Ghassānid title. There are also grounds for assuming that the Umayyads forged positive relations with the Byzantine rulers in Syria and probably even with the emperor in Constantinople. The story about the meeting between Abū Sufyān and the Byzantine emperor Heraclius around the year 628, although of a legendary-polemic nature, could not have been invented without some factual basis. It would have been difficult to describe this legendary meeting had Abū Sufyān or any other prominent Umayyad not indeed met high-ranking Byzantine officials. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the Umayyads emerged and were accepted as the *mulūk* of Syria as well as the *amīrs*, leaders of the faithfuls, *mu'minūn*.<sup>13</sup> It is the term *khalfah* which is of no meaning or relevance in this period prior to the creation of the unified and standardised Islamic historical tradition. The first known Umayyad leader of the *mu'minūn* in Syria was Mu'āwiyah, although there are indications that his brother Yazīd must have preceded him.

The appearance of the Umayyads as the leaders of the *mu'minūn* and the “kings” of the Syrian Arabs constitutes an internal contradiction within the standard Islamic history. On the one hand, the majority of the Umayyads have been presented as bad Muslims and usurpers, but on the other hand the first two known Umayyad rulers of Syria were “nominated” by no less than 'Umar, the second Caliph in the standard Islamic *heilige Geschichte*.

It is clear that in the history of the unified beginning of Islam, the existence of

Umayyad rule in Syria could not have been ignored. The only way to incorporate it into the ideal, centrally controlled Islamic state, carefully and conveniently arranged by the later Muslim historians, was by having the Umayyad rulers of Syria “installed” in their positions by the second and third Caliphs of the standard unified beginning. In reality, however, we must treat the Umayyads in Syria as an independent phenomenon in the long process of the creation of Islam.

Mu‘āwiyah crowned himself as a *malik* in Jerusalem. An act of this kind, if the tradition is true, would have been meaningful for both the Christian Arabs of Syria and the *mu‘minūn* community, without really challenging the supreme Byzantine authority, which, as we have pointed out, bestowed similar titles on some of the great Arab leaders.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what Mu‘āwiyah’s *imān* or faith was. Even if one takes into consideration the fact that the later anti-Umayyad traditions made an effort to blemish him and his son, it is clear that his relations with Christianity were very close. He relied in his rule on the Arab tribe of Kalb that was, on the whole, Christian, and consolidated his alliance with this tribe by marrying the Christian daughter of one of its leaders, who bore him a son, Yazīd, whom he chose to be his heir. A prince who had grown up among both Christian and *mu‘minūn* communities was the natural choice to lead the Christian Arabs of Syria as well as the *mu‘minūn* community there.

The faith of these early Umayyad *amīrs* of the faithfuls far from resembled the Islam which evolved later. Around the core of the *mu‘minūn* community was a large contingent of Christian Arabs, Jews and Samaritans with a very sophisticated scriptural tradition based upon the names of biblical prophets, kings and saints. This scriptural tradition, in addition to being recorded and popular, was supported by the holy places of antiquity. These impressive holy places were connected with the Christian dogma of salvation as well as with the concrete message of the Jewish prophets, and the Jewish historical and eschatological tradition.

Accepting the historical seniority of the Jewish and Christian revelations, the *mu‘minūn* of Syria shared with the Jews and Christians not only their prophets and saints, but also their places of worship. Whichever way one looks at it, the fact is that *mu‘minūn* and Christians shared the Cathedral of St John in Damascus, and in all probability many other Christian houses of worship too.<sup>14</sup>

For Mu‘āwiyah and other early Umayyads, including ‘Abd al-Malik, Jerusalem was a holy city in the biblical sense of the word. For the populations of Syria, of all religions, she was the stage of ancient prophecy and linked in one way or another with such great names as Abraham, David, Solomon and Jesus of Nazareth.

The earliest existing inscriptions, with which we shall presently deal, attest to the fact that the *mu‘minūn* in Syria and the official church were locked in a fundamental debate concerning the nature of Jesus. There was nothing new in such a debate: the church itself had been torn because of it for centuries, and every ecumenical council called to deal with the problem had only led to the birth of yet another Christian “heresy”. In this context, one can easily understand the involvement of the *mu‘minūn* in this debate.

Jerusalem was important in the context of this debate: the *mu‘minūn* stressed its connection with the general prophetic side in which Jesus was also included, while the

Christians emphasised its being the place where the history of salvation began and would be completed. It was Jerusalem of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Second Coming.

This brings us to the enigmatic building of the Dome of the Rock. According to the much-discussed tradition recorded by Ya'qūbī,<sup>15</sup> 'Abd al-Malik is said to have conceived the idea of diverting the Ḥajj from Mecca to Jerusalem, and for this reason he built the Dome over the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Goldziher accepted the tradition completely, while Goitein rejected it as a Shī'ite fabrication.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, Ya'qūbī's tradition tells us a story in the reverse. The Dome of the Rock, a unique monument with apparently no real function, is the key to the re-evaluation of the circumstances surrounding the beginning of Islam. Once we understand the true meaning of the Dome of the Rock we will have a true picture of the birth of Islam as a unified religion out of the diversity of the *mu'minūn* communities.

## V

'Abd al-Malik was a ruler with great vision and no less ambition. After a long crisis, he re-established Umayyad rule in Syria with himself at the head of the *mu'minūn* community, and proceeded to bring under his rule the two other major centres of *mu'minūn*: Iraq and Ḥijāz. His problems in Syria were more theological than political, for under the influence of both Christianity and Judaism, the *mu'minūn* community could have easily lost its independent identity, taking into consideration that the great Arab tribes of Syria had long ago been converted to Christianity. There was a great need, therefore, to erect for the Syrian *mu'minūn* a centre of worship that took into account the attachment to past holy history and yet emphasised the uniqueness of the new faith. The inscription, dated 72/691, some 240 metres long in the Dome of the Rock, tells the story.<sup>17</sup> The inscription has three distinct motives: first, the acceptance of all prophets as true prophets and of their revelations as authentic; second, the absolute rejection of the Sonship of Jesus and the insistence on his being a human prophet, though with a divine spirit; and third, for the first time, the presentation of Muhammad as the most important of all prophets and of Islam as the name of the true religion.<sup>18</sup> The Dome of the Rock was thus built as the major sanctuary of Islam and as a symbol of its superiority over the other religions.<sup>19</sup> *Islam* was born as a term which was to unify all the groups of *mu'minūn* under the slogan of *dīn al-ḥaqq*, the "true religion" with which Muhammad was sent in order to rule over all the other religions.<sup>20</sup> Islam was also declared the religion of the state, though the state was not yet unified.

## VI

The Dome of the Rock was built mainly for the *mu'minūn* of Syria, with no relation whatsoever to the *ka'bah* in Mecca, for at that time the *ka'bah* was not in 'Abd al-Malik's hands, and was not yet part of his reforms. When they did not use the Christian churches for worship, the *mu'minūn* of Syria and Egypt (who shared the same religious cultural



world) built their own mosques, with the *qiblah*, the direction of prayer, turned to the east.

The traditions about east-facing *qiblah* in the mosque of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀs in Fustaṭ cannot be accidental. Yāqūt, who wrote early in the thirteenth century, quoting earlier sources, says that "eighty disciples of the Prophet (*ṣaḥābah*)" supervised the building of this mosque. "The *qiblah*," he says, was "very much turned towards the east" (*musharraqaḥ jidan*). True, the printed text of Yāqūt's geographical dictionary says that the *qiblah* was only "slightly turned to the east" but, Yāqūt's sources, as we shall presently see, attest to the correct reading. Yāqūt himself or, more probably, one of the copiests of his book erroneously copied the word *qalīlan* (slightly) from the following sentence in his book.

Ibn Duqmāq, on the authority of earlier sources, refers to a similar tradition which also points out the fact that "eighty of the *ṣaḥābah* (the names of few of whom are mentioned) were present when the *qiblah* of the mosque was built, and it is said that it was very much turned to the east, and that Qurrah b. Sharīk, after he had destroyed the mosque at the time of (caliph) Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik, (he rebuilt it and) turned its *qiblah* slightly to the south (*tayāman bihā qalīlan*)".

Also Maqrīzi, quoting al-Kindī, describes in detail the building of the same *qiblah*. In his tradition not eighty *ṣaḥābah* attended the building but eight and some say that there were only four. 'Amr b. al-ʿĀs instructed the builders saying "turn the *qiblah* to the east and you will be facing the sanctuary" (*sharriqū al-qiblah tuṣībū al-Haram*). The "sanctuary in this tradition, cannot mean the sanctuary of Mecca. Yazīd b. Ḥabīb who is quoted as the source for this account adds that the *qiblah* was then "built turned very much towards the east (*fa-shurriqat jiddan*) and 'Amr b. al-ʿĀs when he prayed in the Friday mosque (*masjid al-jāmiʿ*) used to turn in prayer almost completely towards the east (*yusallī nāḥiyat ash-sharq illā ash-shayʿ al-yasīr*)."

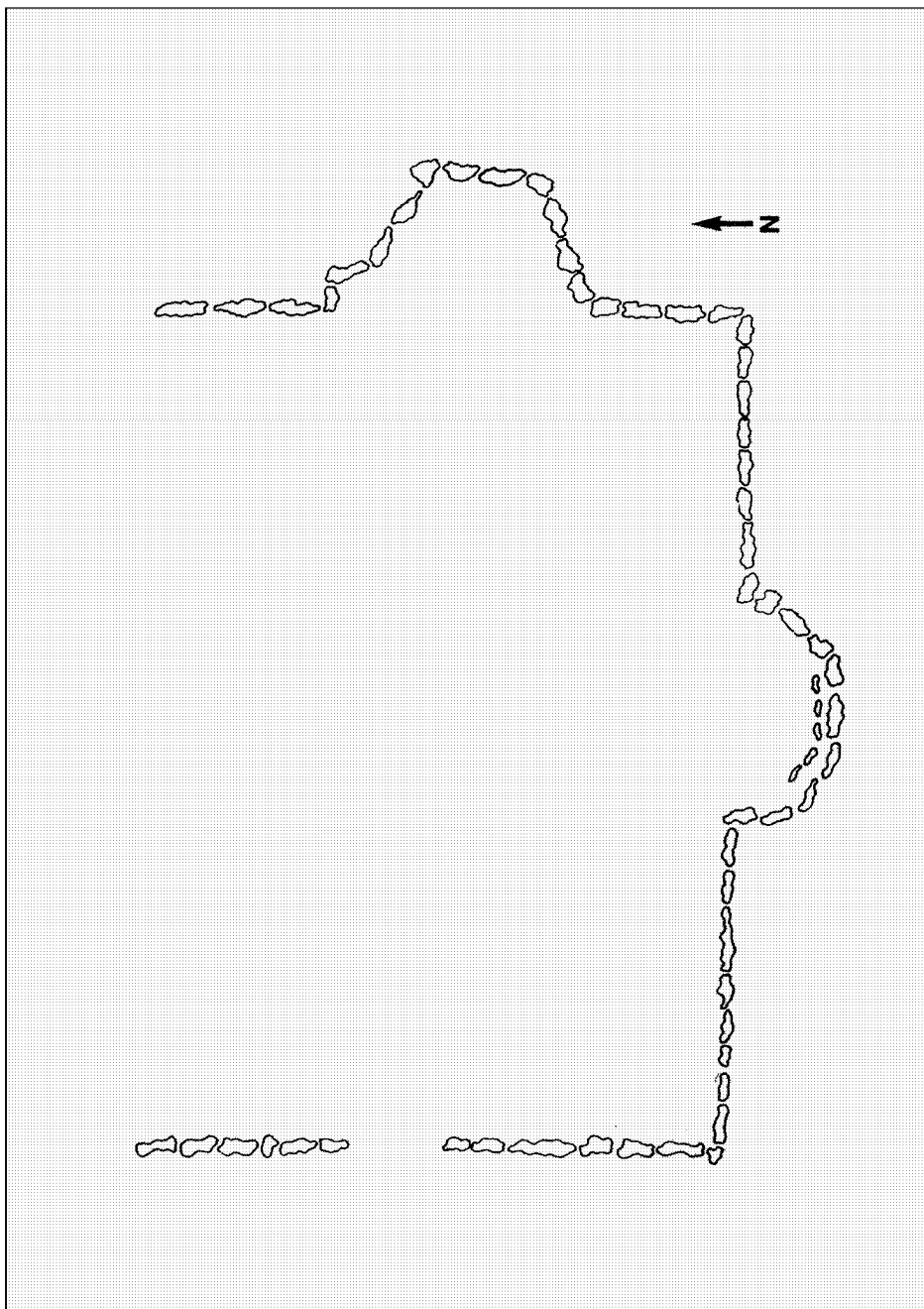
The end of this tradition is, however, of extreme importance for our discussion. An eyewitness is quoted as saying: "I saw 'Amr b. al-ʿĀs entering a church and he prayed therein and he did not turn away from their (namely, the Christians) *qiblah* but very little (*dakhal kanīsaḥ fa-ṣalla fīhā wa-lam yanṣarif ʿan quiblatihim illā qalīlan*)."

The number of the *ṣaḥābah*, mentioned as present at the building of 'Amr's mosque alternates in the various traditions between eighty, eight, four and two. The number, however, is not the important factor, because the *ṣaḥābah* presence was indicated to lend the traditions about the eastern *qiblah* a status of high authority.

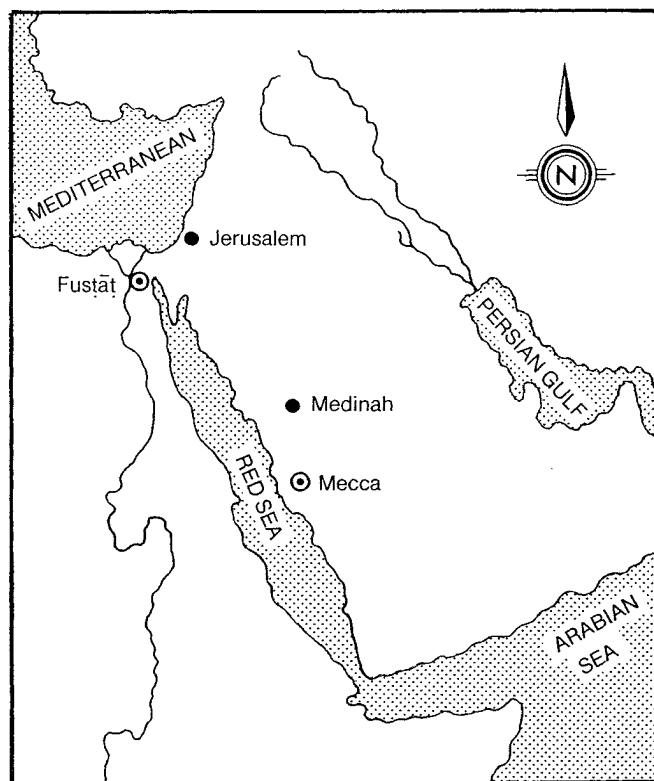
The fact that 'Amr b. al-ʿĀs is said to have prayed in a church could not be unusual, for the early *mu'minūn* shared the churches with the Christians. The additional note that 'Amr turned a fraction from the Christian *qiblah* may very well be a later insertion indicating that 'Amr did not want to look completely like a Christian.

These traditions about the mosque of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀs in Fustaṭ with its east-facing direction of prayer should not surprise us. For the *mu'minūn* in the Christian-dominated territories mosques could not have been different from the churches that had their apses facing east.<sup>21</sup>

Exciting archaeological proof of the tradition concerning the eastward direction of prayer in the early mosques of Syria exists not far from Be'er Oran in the Negev. There I



**FIGURE 17.1** Schematic plan of the mosque in Be'er Orah



**Fustāt in relation to Mecca**

found an open mosque with two mihrābs, one facing east and one facing south (Figure 17.1). The one facing south was clearly a later addition made after ‘Abd al-Malik’s reforms came into effect. This little desert mosque symbolises the last stage of our theory.<sup>22</sup>

The building of the Dome of the Rock did not provide ‘Abd al-Malik with a fully satisfying answer to the problem of how to emphasise the superiority of Islam and turn it into the religion of the unified state. Jerusalem could well have been an adequate religious place of worship for the Syrians and the Egyptians, but it meant nothing to the Iraqis, the Hijāzies or the Mesopotamians. A place of worship which would represent the centrality of Muḥammad, the Arab nature of the new religion and which would be totally independent of all other religions, yet connected with the biblical genealogy, had yet to be found. The choice fell on Mecca and the *ka’bah*. On the one hand there existed the ancient tradition connecting the *ka’bah*, or Mecca in general, with Abraham, and on the other hand there was no question that the activity of the Prophet had begun there. ‘Abd al-Malik decided to make Mecca into the sanctuary *par excellence* of the new state religion that he had begun in Syria, but first he had to conquer it, as it was ruled by

another *amīr al-mu'minīn*, 'Abdallah b. Zubayr. Moreover, there was a unique connection between 'Abdallah b. Zubayr, the Prophet and the *ka'bah*. This connection was stressed by traditions originating in the Zubayrid family.

The poet al-Uqaylī praises 'Abdallah b. Zubayr as a righteous person who had the knowledge to interpret the Prophet's words and as a godly man who dwells in the *ka'bah* like one of its doves.

The Prophet was so fond of 'Abdallah b. Zubayr that he called his beloved wife, 'Ā'ishah, who in reality was 'Abdallah's maternal aunt, "*umm 'abdallah*", 'Abdallah's mother. The special relation of 'Abdallah to the *ka'bah* is further attested by the fact that he was called '*ā'idh al-bayt*, he who finds refuge in the House (namely, the *ka'bah*).<sup>23</sup>

In 693, two years after the building of the Dome of the Rock, Mecca was conquered. The conquest of Mecca was the final stage in ascertaining the establishment of the unity of Islam. In the Islamic tradition the event is marked as the time in which the various *mu'minūn* communities rallied around 'Abd al-Malik. It is not far-fetched to assume that 'Abd al-Malik's conquest of Mecca, which marks the beginning of Islam's imperial history, was retrospectively introduced into Muḥammad's *sīrah* as the major event in the Prophet's career. In the *sīrah*, it was the Prophet who conquered Mecca and purified the *ka'bah*, with the Umayyad Abū Sufyān playing a major role in the whole affair.

'Abd al-Malik ordered the *ka'bah* to be destroyed and rebuilt according to what was officially declared to be the Prophet's *original* plan. Symbolically it meant that Ibn Zubayr's sanctuary was not really the Prophet's sanctuary. In the year 76/695 'Abd al-Malik prepared the pilgrimage to Mecca, demonstratively inaugurating the new *ka'bah* and giving an official public expression to the elevated position of Mecca.<sup>24</sup>

The new *ka'bah* thus represented the culmination of 'Abd al-Malik's reforms: a central independent Arab sanctuary was finally established with the Prophet at its centre, and now the Ḥajj could be diverted, also for the Syrians, from Jerusalem to Mecca. Ya'qūbī, either intentionally or because in his time the true meaning of 'Abd al-Malik's reforms was forgotten, inverted the tradition and reported a story which made sense to him that the Ḥajj was diverted from Mecca to Jerusalem. All the mosques were then ordered to have their former eastward-directed *qiblahs* changed to face Mecca. This is when our little mosque in the Negev had its southern *qiblah* added to it. The traditionalists, who could not envisage the birth of Islam in the Holy Land, could not have known that in the order of the development of early Islam, Jerusalem preceded Mecca. That they had, however, a notion of this development is attested by the fact that a tradition was preserved in the *sīrah* stressing the fact that Jerusalem was the *qiblah* before Mecca. It is probably here that we have to look for the roots of the tradition which assure us that at the End of Days the *ka'bah* will be conducted to Jerusalem "like the bride conducted to her bridegroom".<sup>25</sup>

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#### NOTES

- 1 P. Crone, and M. Cook, *Hagarism*, Cambridge, 1977.
- 2 That tradition was invented to suit political, social, religious, economic and other needs was a well-known fact to Muslim scholars. They even classified the motives behind the invention of

- ḥadīth*, but they used methods of *ḥadīth* criticism that were almost no use for ascertaining anything about either the information included in the traditions or their origins. See Abū al-Faraj, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān b. 'Alī b. al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-Mawḍū'āt*, ed. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān, Madinah, 1966, I, pp. 37–47; 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Araḳ al-Kinānī, *Tanzīh ash-Sharī'ah al-Marfū'ah 'an al-akhbār ash-Shanī'ah al-Mawḍū'ah*, ed. 'Abd al-Latīf *et al.*, Beirut, 1979, I, p. 13.
- 3 C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism*, New York and London, 1916, p. 23.
  - 4 I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern, II, Oxford, 1971, p. 126f.
  - 5 J. Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, translated by Wier, 1927, Khayats reprints, Beirut, 1969, p. 505.
  - 6 For another view of Arab conquest of Syria see M. Sharon, "The military reforms of Abū Muslim" in M. Sharon (ed.), *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization*, Jerusalem, 1986, pp. 105–12, and forthcoming "The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*" in JSAI, 1988.
  - 7 The idea that harmony and unity characterised the beginning of Islam was expressed in a tradition which attributes to one of the Prophet's disciples the following words: "At the time of the Prophet, may Allah save him and give him peace, our faces were all turned in one direction, but after the death of the Prophet . . . we turned ourselves hither and thither" Nu'aym b. Ḥammād al-Marwazī, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, MS BM or 9449 fol 6b.
  - 8 Muḥammad b. Abū al-Qāsim b. 'Alī at-Ṭabari, *Bishārat al-Muṣṭafā li-Shī'at al-Murtaḍā* Najaf 1383/1963, p. 186.
  - 9 These were the followers of the prophet Musaylimah, who was called *amīr al-Mu'minīn*. There can hardly be a question that the term, describing the leadership of a community of monotheists, existed before Muḥammad and during his time, and the usage of this term by him and by his successors was not a novelty. See Mughultāy, *Az-Zahr al-Bāsim fī Sirat Abi al-Qāsim*, Ms. Leiden, or 370 fols, 213b–214a, (on the title used by Musaylimah). Aḥmad b. Hajar al-Haytamī, *aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqah*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Latīf, Cairo, 1375, p. 88 regarding its usage by the Prophet for 'Abdullah b. Jaḥsh (I wish to thank Professor M.J. Kister for furnishing me with these important sources.)
  - 10 The fact that Mu'āwiyah was called concurrently with the others by the title of *amīr al-mu'minīn* is attested by the fact that later traditions tried to prove the contrary. See Dhahbī, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā*, ed. Munajjid, Cairo, n.d. I, p. 82; 'Abd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, ed. al-A'zamī, Beirut 1392/1972, X, p. 371, where Mu'āwiyah reportedly says: "You are the *mu'minūn* and I am your *amīr*".
  - 11 Y a'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, Beirut, 1379/1960, I, pp. 206–7.
  - 12 M. Sharon, "The cities of Palestine under the Islamic rule" *Cathedra*, 40, Jerusalem, 1986, p. 99 (Hebrew) and note; C. Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, London, 1956, p. 7.
  - 13 Abū Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Būlāq, 1284–1285, rep. Beirut, 1390/1970, VI, pp. 94–5. It is clear that the aim of the tradition is to prove that Muḥammad's Prophethood was foretold by the Christians and recognised by no less than the Emperor Heraclius himself, who symbolises, in this type of tradition, Christendom as well as Christianity.
  - 14 See Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Bulḍān*, ed. M.J. De Goeje, Leiden, pp. 125–6-. cf. G. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, London, 1890, p. 231.
  - 15 Ya'qūbī, op. cit. II, p. 261.
  - 16 I. Goldziher, op. cit. pp. 44–5 and n. I in p. 45; S.D. Goitein, "The historical background of the erection of the Dome of the Rock", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXX, 1950, pp.

- 104–8; and the extensive study of O. Grabar “The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem”, *Ars Orientalis*, III, 1959, pp. 33ff.
- 17 The long inscription above the arches of the inner arcade (on both sides) is supplemented by two inscriptions on copper plates on the northern and eastern gates of the Dome (removed in 1973 and never returned to their places). Published by M. Van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, Jerusalem, Haram* (II B2), Le Caire, 1927, nos. 215, 216, 217, pp. 228–55; E. Combe, J. Sauvaget and G. Wiet, *Repertoire Chronologique d'Épigraphie arabe*, Cairo 1931 . . . nos. 9–11).
  - 18 The verses Qur'ān, 3: 18–19 were carefully, and entirely, quoted at the end of the inner face of the inscription.
  - 19 Cf. Grabar, op. cit., p. 44a.
  - 20 Qur'ān, 9:33.
  - 21 See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, (ed. Wuestenfeld) Leipzig, 1866–1873, s.v. “Fusṭāt”; Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār*, I, pp. 62f.; Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, II, pp. 246–7, 249; Ibn Taghrī Birdī *An-Nujūm az-Zāhirah*, Cairo, 1936, pp. 66–7; S. Basheer, *Muqaddimah fī al-Ta'rikh Al-Ākhar*, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 60. See also Kindī, *Wulāt*, p. 13, where it is stated that 'Amr's *qiblah* faced Yaḥmūm, a mountain range to the east of Fusṭāt. The mosque of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ in Cairo was not turned directly to the east but towards the winter sun rising point in the northern hemisphere, namely in 117°. See G. Hawkins and D. King, in *J.H.A.*, XIII, (1982), pp. 102–9; D. King, *Muqarnas*, 2, (1984) pp. 73–84. Thanks are due to Dr A. Elad and U. Avner from the Hebrew University for drawing my attention to many of these references.
  - 22 B. Rothenberg, *Timna, Valley of the Biblical Copper Mines*, London, 1972, p. 221 and Figure 71. For Beno Rothenberg who was the first to describe the structure near Be'er Orah, the mosque was an enigma. The archaeologist Uzzi Avner, who drew my attention to the mosque, reported large quantities of Umayyad pottery in the place. The structure is far more complete than what appears in Rothenberg's drawing.
  - 23 See Muṣ'ab b. 'Abdallah az-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Levi-Provançal, Cairo, 1953, pp. 237–9, Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, IVB, ed. M. Schoessinger, Jerusalem, 1938, pp. 17 (I. 6), 19 (I. 15), 21 (I. 21: where 'Abdallah b. Zubayr reportedly says: “I am only a dove among the doves of this sanctuary”), 25 (I. 11), 27 (I. 9), 29 (I. 4), 52 (I. 21), 54 (I. 8); V, ed. S.D. Goitein, Jerusalem, 1936, p. 363 (I. 12). 'Abdallah b. az-Zubayr's supporters were referred to as *ahl al-masjid* (Dīnawarī, *al-Akḥbār aṭ-Ṭiwāl*, ed. 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Āmir and Jamāl ad-Dīn ash-Shayyāl, Cairo, 1960, pp. 266 (I. 1), 314 (I. 9).
  - 24 See Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashraf* XI, = *Anonyme arabische Chronik*, ed. W. Ahlwardt, Griefswald, 1883, p. 177f. *Aghānī*, IV, p. 52. One tradition in the *Aghānī* leaves no doubt as to the importance of the year 73/693. This is not only “the year of unity” but also the year in which the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik only begins: “when 'Abd al-Malik assumed his functions as caliph in the Year of the Unity.” Ibid. p. 102.
  - 25 See Al-Wāsiṭī, *Faḍā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*, ed. I. Ḥasson, Jerusalem, 1979. English translation of some of the most relevant traditions for our discussion in I. Ḥasson, “Muslim literature in praise of Jerusalem”, *The Jerusalem Cathedra*, Jerusalem, 1981, pp. 177–83.



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# İŞFAHÂN-NIHÂWAND. A SOURCE-CRITICAL STUDY OF EARLY ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

*Albrecht Noth*

There are two accounts of the Muslims' fight for the Persian city of İşfahân in Ṭabarî's *Tārīkh al-rusûl wa-l-mulûk*, accounts which, although they stand side by side, differ considerably.<sup>1</sup> It is the second of these accounts that shall be the subject of the present detailed study, not because it is a particularly good source for the conquest of this Persian city, but because it enables us to make several important observations on the subject of early Islamic historiography.

The account is also transmitted, with unimportant variations or more or less abridged, by Abū Yūsuf,<sup>2</sup> Balādhurî,<sup>3</sup> Mas'ûdî,<sup>4</sup> Abū Nu'aym<sup>5</sup> and Ibn al-Athîr,<sup>6</sup> and it consequently received wide dissemination. It is possible to determine the time of its origin fairly exactly. As it is already found in Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), it most definitely belongs in the second half of the eighth century. Its isnād allows us to delimit the date even more closely. The first common link in the various versions of the isnād<sup>7</sup> is the Baṣran traditionist Ḥammād b. Salama (d. 167/784).<sup>8</sup> It is most probably this Ḥammād – and definitely not the eye witness of events standing at the end of the isnād<sup>9</sup> – whom [275] we have to claim as the originator or disseminator of the İşfahân

<sup>1</sup> The first account: al-Ṭabarî, *Tārīkh al-rusûl wa-l-mulûk* ed, de Goeje (Leiden, 1879–1901), I/2637, 14–2640, 12 (henceforth cited as 'Tab'); the second account: Tab. I/2641, 17–2645, 4 (under A.H. 21).

<sup>2</sup> *Kitāb al-kharāj*, ed. Bulak (1302 AH) p.18f.

<sup>3</sup> *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. de Goeje (Leiden 1866) p.303f.

<sup>4</sup> *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. Barbier de Meynard (Paris 1865) IV, 230ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Dhikr akhbār İşbahân*, ed. S. Dederling (Leiden 1931 ff.) I, 21ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Kāmil fî l-tārīkh*, ed. Tornberg (Leiden 1866 ff.) III, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Complete isnāds in Ṭabarî, Balādhurî and Abū Nu'aym.

<sup>8</sup> Despite the extensive biographical information about him (cf. Flügel, *Fihrist* II (Leipzig 1872) p.95 and 99 (= notes on I, p.219, 10 and 227, 4) and Ziriqlî, *Al-a'lām. Qāmūs tarājīm li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā'* ... (2nd ed. Cairo 1954ff.) II, p. 302b and n.1), he, like many of his contemporaries, remains a completely shadowy character.

<sup>9</sup> Ma'qil b. Yasār. Concerning the lack of reliability of similarly 'beautiful' eyewitness isnāds (the corresponding isnād in ḥadīth and law would be one with the Prophet as the last link) cf. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford 1950), p.163ff. and passim.



tradition.<sup>10</sup> The account in its present form would consequently have been created around 750, more than a hundred years after the actual events.

Let us now turn to the content of this account of a conquest. It starts with the Caliph 'Umar asking the former Persian general Hurmuzān,<sup>11</sup> who was then in Medina, whether Fārs, Ādharbayjān or Iṣfahān would recommend itself as the target with the greatest priority for the conquering Muslim armies. The Persian couches his answer in an image: Fārs and Ādharbayjān are the two wings of the Persian Empire, Iṣfahān its head. If one of the wings were removed, the 'Persian bird' could still keep itself alive, but if the head were cut off, the wings would be useless as well: Iṣfahān, the head, would be the obvious choice as the target. 'Umar then goes to the mosque where he finds al-Nu'mān b. Muqarrin (al-Muzanī) in prayer, and when he has finished, 'Umar tells him he intends to appoint him *'āmil*. Nu'mān's reaction is, 'With a tax collector's duties (*jābiyan*)? Never, only with the powers of a warrior (*ghāziyan*)!' Whereupon 'Umar sends him as general to Iṣfahān, ordering the Kufans to join him as auxiliaries. When he reaches his destination, Nu'mān sends Mughīra b. Shu'ba as his messenger to the commander in chief of the Persian army (whose title is *Dhū-l-ḥājibayn*). On the advice of his entourage, the Persian presents himself to the Muslim decked out in all the splendour at his disposal. The Muslim, however, is not at all impressed and, in order to teach the Persians amazement (*li yataṭayyarū*), proceeds to belabour their precious rugs with his spear. In the following conversation between the Arab and the Persian, the latter indicates to his interlocutor that the Arabs only left their country because of unbearable famine, and that he would be only too happy to help them out with food, if they withdraw again. Mughīra freely admits the miserable conditions of the *ma'āshir al-'arab*; he makes them sound even more terrible. However, he continues, the Arabs' misery has ended with the Prophet's mission, for he has promised the Arabs victory over the Persians and acquisition of their wealth, and now they have come [276] to get what he has promised them. Then he once again tries to amaze the Persians by suddenly sitting down next to the general on the latter's throne. After they have removed him none too gently he points out to the Persians that this is hardly the accepted way of treating an emissary; certainly not among the Arabs. In conclusion the Persian general asks Mughīra whether the Muslims

<sup>10</sup> Concerning the importance of the first common link in different versions of an isnād in dating traditions, see Schacht, *Origins* (cf. n.9), p.171ff. – Concerning Ḥammād as the probable author of the account cf. also Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 305, 9f., where the account is called '*ḥadīth Ḥammād b. Salama*', although Ḥammād is neither the first nor the last link in the chain of transmitters.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. EI II col.359a, s.v.

would cross over to them or whether they should cross over to the Muslims (for the battle), and Mughīra announces that the Muslims will cross over to the Persians. Now they prepare for battle. The Persians, chained together in tens, fives, or threes (to prevent them from fleeing), begin the attack. Nu'mān is still hesitating, and when Mughīra tries to press him to attack, he reminds the latter of the Prophet's custom to begin an attack only after sunset, when the evening breeze springs up. He gives some tactical orders in a speech to the army: he would shake his standard (*liwā'*) three times, and during the first and second times the warriors must prepare themselves and at the third time, attack. He then asks God to grant him martyrdom (*shahāda*), and the Muslims, victory. After his speech the battle starts, as intended at the third shaking of the standard, and Nu'mān is the first to fall. However, the Muslims are victorious after the Persian general dies as well; falling off his mule he slashes his body. After the battle, Ma'qil b. Yasār (he now talks in the first person, as the isnād introduced him as the eye witness and narrator of events) takes care of the dying Nu'mān, who asks who won the battle. Ma'qil tells him of the Muslim victory, and Nu'mān asks him to write to 'Umar of the victory. Now that Nu'mān is no longer the Muslim general, the warriors rally round al-Ash'āth b. Qays; some famous ones among them are named. The conclusion of the account is the narrative of how they approached Nu'mān's *umm walad* (the mother of his son) asking whether her husband had not left her anything, whereupon she produces a casket containing a letter. In it Nu'mān has ordered his succession: if he should die in battle, someone (*fulān*) should replace him, and if this someone should die, another one.

Two things are very noticeable even after only cursory reading of this account: firstly, that it is composed of several images, or narrative motifs: the breaks in the transitions from one scene to the next are tangible.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, that this text does not really [277] contain anything that could be seen as typical of the battle for Iṣfahān. If Iṣfahān had not been mentioned in the discussion between 'Umar and Hurmuzān,<sup>13</sup> the account could be referring to any battle the Muslims fought in Persia, or indeed anywhere else.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Here some examples: p.2642, 5 (the transition between Hurmuzān's advice to appointing Nu'mān), p.2642, 10 (arrival in Iṣfahān and dispatching the messenger), p.2643, 10 (Mughīra's speech and decision to sit on the Persian's throne), p.2643, 14 (Mughīra's complaint of the bad [277] treatment he is receiving from the Persians and the Persian's inquiry who should move against whom), p. 2645, 2 (the Muslims rallying under al-Ash'āth b. Qays and the inquiring from Nu'mān's widow as to his estate).

<sup>13</sup> Three variants of the account (A. Yūsuf, Balādhurī and Ṭabarī), mention a place name a second time; however, in a different passage in each of the variants, so it is probable that this was a later explanatory addition

<sup>14</sup> There is nothing in the account to indicate that the enemy is Persian.

Let us look into this second observation more deeply. Even in the earliest Islamic historiography a consequence of the vagueness of this account was that it could be claimed for two military events of the first wave of conquests, for Iṣfahān and for Nihāwand. While Ṭabarī and Abū Nuʿaym relate it to Iṣfahān, Abū Yūsuf, Balādhurī and Masʿūdī consider it to be a description of the events that took place in Nihāwand.<sup>15</sup>

This immediately gives rise to the question for which of the two military events the account was originally conceived. The transmission points towards its having been linked to Nihāwand, as the older transmitters, Abū Yūsuf and Balādhurī, refer it to Nihāwand, whereas only the younger transmitters, Ṭabarī and Abū Nuʿaym, refer it to Iṣfahān. It is of particular importance here that Abū Yūsuf (d. 798) lived very close in time to the creation of this account (ca. 750) and might, in fact, have heard it first hand. Another weighty argument in favour of the original connection of this account with Nihāwand is what we learn about its hero, Al-Nuʿmān b. Muqarrin. In all the possible sources – with the exception of this Iṣfahān tradition – Nuʿmān appears as the general and martyr of Nihāwand;<sup>16</sup> according to Muslim tradition, there is consequently no doubt that he belongs here and not to Iṣfahān.<sup>17</sup> If our account had indeed been written with reference to Iṣfahān in the first place, the author must have been either so ignorant or so brazen that he simply claimed the hero of the famous [278] battle for Nihāwand for the battle for Iṣfahān, which, it must be said, is really unlikely.

Thus it can be regarded as fairly certain that the account was originally a tradition referring to Nihāwand, and it is now necessary to clarify why it was later linked to Iṣfahān. If we do not want to believe it to be a deliberate forgery, which remains always possible, a plausible explanation can be found in the narrative motif of Hurmuzān's bird parable, which introduces our tradition. The objective of the later military expedition is mentioned only here with certainty.<sup>18</sup> There are several versions of this parable, which is obviously

<sup>15</sup> In the sources quoted notes 1–5.

<sup>16</sup> I would like to refer to the registers in the relevant historical works s. v. 'Al-Nuʿmān b. Muqarrin'. Cf. also al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, vol.14, p.28, 2, where Nuʿmān is said to be buried near Nihāwand.

<sup>17</sup> It is irrelevant whether this is also valid for the historical Nuʿmān. – It is not possible for him to have taken part in the battles for both Iṣfahān and Nihāwand, as the battle for Iṣfahān was later than that for Nihāwand, where he fell.

<sup>18</sup> The second reference to a location in three versions of the account is probably a later addition (cf. n. 13).

an independent narrative motif,<sup>18a</sup> one of which refers to Nihāwand.<sup>19</sup> In all probability this was found at the beginning of the account and was later confused or exchanged with the Iṣfahān version which either existed independently or in a different context. After this exchange it became possible, if not necessary, to link the account of the battle to Iṣfahān as well. This explanation finds some support in the fact that even Abū Yūsuf, Balādhurī and Mas'ūdī, although they know the account as a Nihāwand tradition,<sup>20</sup> mention the location Iṣfahān in their versions of Hurmuzān's bird parable. This discrepancy is convincingly explained if we assume an exchange of the two versions of the parable. In any case it makes quite clear that Hurmuzān's bird parable, was in some way a decisive factor in the mistaken attribution of the whole account to the battle for Iṣfahān.

However, even if our explanation – that the presence of more than one version of Hurmuzān's bird parable can be held responsible for the double use of the account of the battle – is correct, this would have been only the superficial cause. The deeper reason is to be found in the vagueness of the account. Just because it was narrated in such vague terms it could be applied to more [279] than one military expedition, just as a documentary form can be used for more than one legal transaction. After all, even if the two accounts had been confused once, this would not have led to transferring one account onto another military event if it had otherwise contained facts which tied it unmistakably to a definite situation during the first wars of conquest; indeed, an exchange of two versions might not have been possible at all in that case.

Thus as the first result of our study we can set down: the Iṣfahān–Nihāwand tradition, which was probably conceived at first with reference to Nihāwand and then transferred onto Iṣfahān, is an example of early Islamic conquest traditions that could be applied, like a form, to more than one event because of their vagueness. This kind of multiple application can be proved for our account. As there are indications that this was no isolated occurrence, it will be worth our while to search for similar cases. We will certainly have to expect – and more frequently than might appear at first – formulaic and stereotyped *futūḥ* traditions. We will be able to gain insight into the workshop

<sup>18a</sup> In purely formal terms, there is probably a connection between this motif and the folk motif of the 'carving of the chicken' found in Oriental folk tales (cf. O. Spies, *Orientalische Stoffe in den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte des Orients, Vol.6 (1952), p.40f.) as well as in European folk tales (cf. *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 6, p.59).

<sup>19</sup> Tabarī I/2600, 17–2601, 5.

<sup>20</sup> In Abū Yūsuf this becomes clear from the traditions surrounding our account; similarly in Balādhurī; Mas'ūdī ends his version of our account with the words '*wa-hādhihī waq'at Nihāwand*'. Sources are at notes. 2–4.

of early Islamic traditionists if we now turn our attention to the individual narrative motifs of our account.

We have already pointed out that the Iṣfahān–Nihāwand tradition is made up out of a sequence of scenes or narrative motifs which can be separated easily as they have been joined together by no means seamlessly. Let us first of all list them in order:

1. ‘Umar’s query and Hurmuzān’s advice (the bird parable);<sup>21</sup>
2. ‘Umar and Nu‘mān in the mosque; Nu‘mān would rather be a warrior than a tax collector; ‘Umar appoints him his general;<sup>22</sup>
3. ‘Umar writes to the Kufans to ask them to support Nu‘mān; Nu‘mān’s order at the end of the account, to write to the Caliph about the Muslims’ victory is really the second part of this motif;<sup>23</sup>
4. Mighira b. Shu‘ba as the Muslims’ messenger to the Persian general, and their conversation;<sup>24</sup> [280]
5. The question of which party should cross over towards the other (to start the fighting);<sup>25</sup>
6. The Persians are chained together in small groups;<sup>26</sup>
7. Nu‘mān intends to attack not before nightfall, as is said to have been the Prophet’s custom;<sup>27</sup>
8. Three shakes of the standard as the signal for the attack;<sup>28</sup>
9. Nu‘mān’s death;<sup>29</sup>
10. Names of famous warriors in the battle;<sup>30</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ṭab. I/2642, 2–6; A. Yūsuf, p.18, 18f.; Balādhurī, p.303, 5–7; Mas‘ūdī, p.230, 5–9; A. Nu‘aym, p. 21, 6–10.

<sup>22</sup> Ṭab. 2642, 6–9; A. Yūsuf, p.18, 19–21; Balādhurī, p.303, 8–10; Mas‘ūdī, p.230, 9–231, 2; A. Nu‘aym, p. 21, 10–12.

<sup>23</sup> Ṭab. 2642, 9 and p.2644, 18; A. Yūsuf, p.18, 21f. and p.19, 19; Balādhurī, p.303, 10 and p.304, 4; Mas‘ūdī, p.231, 3 and p. 235, 5; A. Nu‘aym, p. 21, 12 (the end is missing).

<sup>24</sup> Ṭab. 2642, 10–2643, 14; A. Yūsuf, p.18, 23–19, 5; Balādhurī, p.303, 11–13 (much abbreviated); Mas‘ūdī, p.231, 4–233, 5; A. Nu‘aym, p. 21, 14–22, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Ṭab. 2643, 14f.; A. Yūsuf, p.19, 6f.; Mas‘ūdī, p.233, 5f; A. Nu‘aym, p.22, 4f; not in Balādhurī.

<sup>26</sup> Ṭab. 2644, 1; A. Yūsuf, p.19, 7; Balādhurī, p.303, 13f.; Mas‘ūdī, p.233, 6f.; A. Nu‘aym, p.22, 5f.

<sup>27</sup> Ṭab. 2644, 1–5; A. Yūsuf, p.19, 7–11; Balādhurī, p.303, 14–17; Mas‘ūdī, p.233, 7–234, 1; not in A. Nu‘aym.

<sup>28</sup> Ṭab. 2644, 6–8; A. Yūsuf, p.19, 11f. and 15; Balādhurī, p.303, 17–20; Mas‘ūdī, p.234, 1–4 and 7; not in A. Nu‘aym.

<sup>29</sup> Ṭab. 2644, 13–2645, 1; A. Yūsuf, p.19, 15–20; Balādhurī, p.303, 20–304, 4; Mas‘ūdī, p.234, 7–235, 6; A. Nu‘aym, p.22, 8f.

<sup>30</sup> Ṭab. 2645, 1f.; A. Yūsuf, p.18, 22f. (in a different position within the narrative); A. Nu‘aym, p.21, 12–14; not in Balādhurī and Mas‘ūdī.

11. Nu'mān' orders his succession.<sup>31</sup>

These constituent parts – easily recognisable as such – which make up our account are not unique to it. Nearly all of them can be found in different combinations in other Nihāwand stories. In the following we shall list evidence of the parallel instances:

A description of events in Nihāwand which can be traced back to Ibn Ishāq and is transmitted in Ṭabarī<sup>32</sup> contains the following motifs from our account: a) Nu'mān prefers fighting the infidels to being a tax collector (2).<sup>33</sup> In this instance Nu'mān is not, however, in Medina but in Kaskar, and the initiative is his own: he approaches 'Umar with the request to relieve him of his position as tax collector and assign him a military task. With the mediation of Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ 'Umar then sends him a written order to betake himself to Nihāwand. b) A list of seven *wujūh aṣḥāb al-nabīy* who took part in the fighting together with Nu'mān (10).<sup>34</sup> c) Nu'mān ordering his succession, giving the names of three persons (11).<sup>35</sup> d) Nu'mān wants to attack in the evening, as recommended by the Prophet (7).<sup>36</sup> In this instance this motif is related to the [281] previous one as Mughīra b. Shu'ba, angry at having been overlooked by Nu'mān when ordering his succession, advocates an early morning attack. e) A triple signal for the attack, here a triple *takbīr* (8).<sup>37</sup> f) The Persians are chained together (6).<sup>38</sup>

Al-Rabī' b. Sulaymān is Ṭabarī's source for another Nihāwand story, which is alleged to have originated with an eye witness,<sup>39</sup> in which we can recognise the following constituents of our Iṣfahān-Nihāwand tradition: a) Hurmuzān's advice (1),<sup>40</sup> here Nihāwand is the bird's head.<sup>41</sup> In addition, this version of the story has a second point, aimed at bringing Hurmuzān into discredit: the Persian advises the Caliph to start his offensive against the bird's wings, but 'Umar is not fooled and draws the correct consequences from the parable and begins with the 'head' Nihāwand. b) Famous Prophet's Companions are

<sup>31</sup> Ṭab. p.2645, 2–4; Mas'ūdī p.235, 7–9; not in the other versions.

<sup>32</sup> *Tārīkh* I/2596, 9–2598, 12 (under A.H. 21).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 2596, 10–15.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 2597, 5–9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 2597, 17–19.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 2597, 19–2598, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 2598, 4–8.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 2598, 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Tārīkh* I/2600, 16–2605, 11 (under A.H. 21).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 2600, 17–2601, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. 5f above.

taking part in the enterprise, three are mentioned by name (10).<sup>42</sup> c) Mughīra as the Muslims' messenger to the Persian general;<sup>43</sup> more detailed but substantially the same. d) The question of who will cross over to whom (5).<sup>44</sup> e) The Persians chained together (6),<sup>45</sup> who are further impeded from fleeing by iron thorns (*ḥasak al-ḥadīd*). f) Following the Prophet's custom, Nu'mān intends to attack in the evening (7).<sup>46</sup> As in Ibn Ishāq's tradition, this leads to a disagreement between Nu'mān and Mughīra, but there is no further explanation given in this instance. g) Three shakes of the standard as sign to attack (8).<sup>47</sup> h) Nu'mān ordering his succession (11).<sup>48</sup> He is said to have designated seven possible successors, three of whom are mentioned by name. i) A written message of victory is sent to 'Umar (3).<sup>49</sup>

Another tradition, reporting of Nu'mān only, is said to have originated with Abū Wā'il, and Ṭabarī heard it from Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ṣafwān al-Thaqafī.<sup>50</sup> This also contains the motif that Nu'mān [282] preferred a fighting assignment to an administrative one (2);<sup>51</sup> as in the account by Ibn Ishāq, Nu'mān is in Kaskar and asks 'Umar in writing to employ him as a warrior.

Another Nihāwand tradition transmitted by Ṭabarī originates with Sayf b. 'Umar,<sup>52</sup> is very long and detailed and contains three of the narrative motifs found in our Iṣfahān–Nihāwand account: a) Nu'mān ordering his succession (11),<sup>53</sup> although in this instance it is 'Umar rather than Nu'mān who designates possible successors; b) Nu'mān intends to attack not before evening (7),<sup>54</sup> and in this instance he faces not only Mughīra's opposition but that of the whole army; c) a triple signal for the attack (8);<sup>55</sup> as in Ibn Ishāq, this is a triple *takbīr*.

The same three motifs we find in Sayf b. 'Umar's account are also present in the Nihāwand account in Dīnawarī,<sup>56</sup> which is transmitted without an isnād. They are the order of the succession (11), as in Sayf's version determined by

<sup>42</sup> Op. cit. 2601, 7–10.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 2601, 12–2603, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 2603, 3–5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 2603, 5–8.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 2603, 8–15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 2603, 18–2604, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 2604, 6–8.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 2605, 4f.

<sup>50</sup> *Tārīkh* I/2615, 1–11 (under A.H. 21).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 2615, 4–7.

<sup>52</sup> *Tārīkh* I/2605, 11–2611, 12 and (continued) 2615, 13–2631, 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 2615, 17–19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 2622, 3–13.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 2624, 6–9.

<sup>56</sup> *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. I. Kratchkovsky (Leiden 1912), p.141, 7–146, 14.

‘Umar,<sup>57</sup> Nu‘mān’s resolution not to attack before evening (7)<sup>58</sup> and the triple shaking of the standard as the sign for the attack (8).<sup>59</sup> Lastly, a tradition about Nihāwand recorded by Abu Nu‘aym<sup>60</sup> contains the motif of Nu‘mān’s succession (decided by ‘Umar) (11)<sup>61</sup> and that of the triple shaking of the standard as the sign for the attack (8).<sup>62</sup>

The main aim of this detailed evidence of the parallel instances of the individual passages of our Iṣfahān–Nihāwand account in other Nihāwand traditions is not to show *that* the motifs can be found elsewhere, but to clarify *how* they are presented in the other instances. It is possible to state that, firstly, the individual motifs do not always appear all together in the various accounts, secondly, they do not always appear in the same order and, thirdly, they do not always appear in the same combinations. These findings lead us to assume that the individual motifs were originally independent and transmitted on their own; an assumption which is further supported by the observation that the different narrative motifs can still be recognised as individual units within the longer accounts. [283] However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the various motifs were originally extracted from one or more longer traditions and then, in their isolated form, reused in different passages. Even if this were the case, however, it would not change the fact that at the stage with which we are concerned the individual motifs have their own individual existence and can be used in different combinations as the components for more detailed accounts.

As the second result of our study we can thus set down that the material we can expect in the traditions of early Islamic historiography is not exclusively made up out of large, self-contained complexes of historical information. Historiographers and transmitters also used individual narrative motifs which they combined in different ways, like the pieces of a mosaic, to create longer accounts.

As the individual components of our account have parallels in other Nihāwand histories, one might be inclined to assume that they were part of a store of traditions which originated with the famous battle of Nihāwand, i.e. that they reflected actual events of that battle – in whatever form. This, however, is not the case, surprising as it may seem. The larger part of them is also found in reports – usually *futūḥ* traditions – which have no factual

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 143, 2–6.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 144, 7–9.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 144, 9–12.

<sup>60</sup> *Dhikr akhbār Iṣbahān*, edition quoted, p.19, 5–20, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p.20, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p.20, 19–21.



connection with Nihāwand at all. To begin with we will list parallel instances of this kind, albeit without any claim to completeness, arranged according to the order in which the narrative motifs from the Iṣfahān–Nihāwand account appear.

### 1. *Hurmuzān's bird parable*

We have already mentioned that there are two versions of this parable, one for Iṣfahān and one for Nihāwand.<sup>63</sup> It would be difficult to determine which of them is the original. There is, however, a third version of the parable, transmitted by Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>64</sup> It is much more general than the other two and, as it also mentions the bird's feet, probably of later origin. This does not, however, mean that its principal content is necessarily younger than that of the other versions. In Bukhārī's version Hurmuzān has the bird's head represent the Persian King (Kisrā) and its two wings the Byzantine [284] Emperor (Qaisar) and Persia (*Fāris*), respectively; he advises to attack the Persian King.<sup>65</sup>

### 2. *Nu'mān's appointment as general*

I have not so far found a parallel to Nu'mān's attitude that fighting is better than collecting taxes. The tendency behind this – hardly true – story will be discussed below.<sup>66</sup>

### 3. *Correspondence between 'Umar and the warriors at Nihāwand*

The motif that the Caliph was in uninterrupted correspondence with the conquering Muslim armies is found so frequently in the literature about the conquests that it is really superfluous to adduce individual instances. Let it suffice to quote a few parallels for the motif that a written message was sent to the Caliph immediately after a Muslim victory.<sup>67</sup>

### 4. *Mughīra as the messenger to the Persian general*

The Muslim messenger in the enemy camp and champion of the cause of Islam is a most popular and much varied motif in the *futūḥ* literature. There

<sup>63</sup> P.5 above.

<sup>64</sup> L. Krehl and T. Juynboll eds, II, (Leiden 1864) *jizya* 1, 3 p.292f.

<sup>65</sup> The bird's feet, although mentioned specifically, are not given any further explanation.

<sup>66</sup> See p.17 below.

<sup>67</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2386, 10; 2392, 16; 2541, 11f.; 2655, 4f.; 2661, 16f.; 2666, 7f.; 2684, 5f.; 2690, 12; 2701, 9f.; 2707, 9f.; it would be easy to find many more.

are two clearly distinct types in the varied presentation of this motif: a) the messenger suggests that the enemy should convert to Islam (*da'wa*); b) the messenger expresses his disdain for the enemy and his confidence of Muslim victory and invincibility.<sup>68</sup> The story of the messenger in our *Iṣfahān-Nihāwand* account is obviously the second type. Besides the parallel in the *Nihāwand* account transmitted by Ṭabarī from al-Rabī' b. Sulaymān mentioned above,<sup>69</sup> there are others, in particular in traditions in connection with the battle of Qādisiyya. The messenger mentioned most frequently is Mughīra b. Shu'ba, who appears to have been the Muslim emissary per se for a number of transmitters.<sup>70</sup> Some others are also named; the parallels in question are here.<sup>71</sup>

[285] 5. 'Crossing over' towards the other ('abara, qaṭa'a)

The negotiations between the Muslims and the enemy concerning who will 'cross over' towards whom in order to begin the fighting, which at first appear relevant to this particular instance, have parallels in other conquest traditions. Negotiations like these are mentioned in accounts of the 'battle of the bridge' (*waq'at al-jisr*),<sup>72</sup> the battle of Buwayb,<sup>73</sup> the battle of Qādisiyya<sup>74</sup> and the victory over Hurmuzān in Ahwāz.<sup>75</sup>

6. *Persians chained together*

One of Khālīd b. al-Walīd's first victories in 'Irāq was one which received the name *yawm dhāt al-salāsil* (day of the chains) in the tradition, as the Persian enemies were chained together on that occasion.<sup>76</sup> Another parallel is found in a tradition on the battle of Qādisiyya.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>68</sup> There are some instances in which these two types appear combined, but it seems that originally they existed independently.

<sup>69</sup> See p. 9 above.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. also Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (Milan 1905ff.) IV, under A.H. 21, para.42, n.2, p.484.

<sup>71</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I (4) under A.H. 14, p.2236, 17ff. (Mughīra as the messenger); p.2235, 20–2236, 10 [285] and continued 2238, 7–2244, 6 (a number of envoys); I (5) under A.H. 14, p.2267, 6–2285, 15 (several parallel traditions with a number of envoys, among them Mughīra); p.2351, 12–2353, 11 (Mughīra).

<sup>72</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I (4) under A.H. 13, p.2175, 3ff. (cf. the parallels 2177, 3ff. and 2177, 15ff.).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 2185, 2ff. (cf. the parallel 2190, 7ff.).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. under A.H. 14, 2237, 8ff.; I (5) under A.H. 14, p.2285, 10ff.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. under A.H. 17, p.2541, 5ff.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. I (4) under A.H. 12, p.2023ff.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. I/2294, 13.

7. *Attack not before the evening, following the Prophet's custom*

This motif is not so much part of the realm of history as of the realm of *ḥadīth*. Consequently it is not, as far as I can see, found in other accounts of conquests, but in the collections of traditions by Bukhārī<sup>78</sup> and Abū Da'ūd.<sup>79</sup> The former mentions it in a larger context, the latter only isolated. It is more probable that this *ḥadīth* was first transmitted by itself and then added into our account, than that it was extracted from the account and then transmitted on its own; consequently we can assume that we are seeing here the use of a *ḥadīth* as the base for the depiction of historical events.

8. *Triple signal for the attack*

The triple signal, with the first two phases ordering the warriors to prepare for battle and the third announcing the attack, is a triple shaking of the standard in our account. It seems that in the eyes of the transmitters [286] this was interchangeable with the triple *takbīr*, as can be seen from the fact that some of the Nihāwand accounts which contain one or more parallels to our account have a triple *takbīr* instead of shaking the standard.<sup>80</sup> There are, once again, several parallel instances in reports of other battles, which mention the triple *takbīr*.<sup>81</sup>

9. *Nu'mān's death*

We would hardly be likely to find parallels for this motif. However, it might be useful to find out whether there is some episode narrated in connection with this that might contain a similar description of the death of another Muslim hero.

10. *Names of famous men who took part in the battle*

Lists of names of well-known Companions of the Prophet (*aṣḥāb* and also *muhājirūn* and *ansār*) are so frequent in the accounts of early Muslim conquests that detailed documentation is superfluous. One instance will be sufficient.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ*, (ed. Krehl and Juynboll), II, 293 (*jizya* I, 3).

<sup>79</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Muṣṭafā*, (ed. Cairo) I, 414 (*jihād* 102).

<sup>80</sup> See pp.9 and 10 above.

<sup>81</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2191 (end); I/2295 in three places; p.2388, 1ff.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. I under A.H. 23, 2798, 12f. The context is one of Mu'āwiya's *ghazwas*.

11. *Nu'mān ordering his succession*

I know of at least one parallel to Nu'mān's appointing successors who should replace him as general in the case of his death; it is found in a tradition concerning the 'battle of the bridge'. In this instance it is Abū 'Ubayd who, like Nu'mān, feels compelled to take this step because he can see a martyr's death (*shahāda*) coming his way.<sup>83</sup>

Now that we have furnished proof that the major part of the narrative motifs in the Iṣfahān-Nihāwand account has parallels not only in other Nihāwand stories but also throughout the conquest literature, it should have become clear enough that our account is nothing but a conglomerate of commonplaces from the *futūḥ* historiography and tradition,<sup>84</sup> which results in a large number of consequences for the source criticism of this kind of historiography. However, before we address these conclusions, we must inquire into the origin and the tendency of the individual narrative motifs [287] we have discovered to have been commonplaces. In source criticism it is not only important to simply recognise the topoi present, but also to classify them correctly – i.e. discover the position they occupied originally – and to track down the tendencies that might be behind them. While it is unlikely that we will arrive at definitive answers to the question of origin and tendency of these commonplaces, we still ought to discuss the possible answers.

Of Hurmuzān's bird parable we can say with certainty that it is part of the group of traditions created around the first Muslim conquests in Persia, and not in other countries, because the former Sassanid general Hurmuzān is a fixed component of this narrative motif. It is not certain, however, whether the parable was originally (as in our example) linked to the account of a battle; it might just as well have been intended to elucidate the second Caliph's military plans and ambitions in greater detail. It is furthermore uncertain whether originally Iṣfahān, Nihāwand or Kisrā was the point of the parable, as it is impossible to determine which of the three versions was the earliest. It is also possible that there were further versions of the parable which also might have been the original. The tendency of the parable, which does certainly not belong in the time in which the transmitters put it, is in all probability to invest one particular event during the early conquests in Persia with particular

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. I/2178 top.

<sup>84</sup> Caetani, *Annali* V under A.H. 23, para.22, p.15f., already recognised this in part.

importance after the event; because of the reasons mentioned above it is, however, impossible to say which particular event this was.<sup>85</sup>

The historical basis of this narrative motif might have been the fact that from time to time Hurmuzān served ʿUmar as advisor. In the Nihāwand version, Hurmuzān gives the Caliph false advice, to start with the wings, whereupon he is rebuked by ʿUmar and receives the epithet ‘enemy of God’ (ʿadūw Allāh); this, however, is a later addition aiming – for whatever reason – to show the Persians in a bad light.

The basis for the passage about ʿUmar appointing Nuʿmān general is the view that military activity is preferable to administrative employment.<sup>86</sup> [288] Appointing Nuʿmān is in fact only an external framework for proclaiming this maxim; as the hero and martyr of Nihāwand, Nuʿmān was most suitable to invest it with significance. Two conditions were necessary for the maxim that military service is better than administrative service to take shape. Firstly, there had to be a clear separation between these two fields of activity – which was not at all the case in the early years; and secondly there had to have been doubts concerning the superiority of military service over administrative service. The maxim is clearly apologetic; it only begins to make sense if it is understood as a defence of the superiority of military service.

The correspondence between ʿUmar and the Muslim armies is part of the greater context of the later systematic arrangement of events from the early years of Islam, an arrangement which is clearly perceptible in the stage of tradition we now see.<sup>87</sup> The Caliph in Medina is shown as the ruling spirit of the conquests, who holds all the threads in his hands. Just as he gives written orders managing every smallest detail, so the Muslim generals believe it is their duty to keep him informed of everything in writing. It is possible that the purpose of this representation was to show early Islam as a particularly orderly and exemplary state; but it may be that the later transmitters, more or less deliberately, transferred the idea of the state prevalent in their own time onto the earlier time – or maybe both played a part. In any case, we must not rely too much on reports of correspondence between the Caliph and the army, not even if the various letters are quoted verbatim.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Cf. also Caetani, *Annali* IV under A.H. 21, para.42, n.1, p.484, who calls the parable a ‘predizione ab eventu’ (‘prediction after the event’); but without giving a reason he believes the Nihāwand version to have been the original one.

<sup>86</sup> This applies to both extant versions of this story (cf. pp.8 and 10 above). The version in which Nuʿmān himself takes the initiative contains this maxim in even more pointed form.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. especially J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islam*, in *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* VI (Berlin 1899), pp.11, 19, 79, 101f.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Wellhausen, op. cit., p.50, and D. S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians* (Calcutta 1930), p.122f.

It is, of course, possible that the true historical basis for the story of the Muslim messenger's visit to the enemies' camp is that during the early conquests the Muslims occasionally negotiated with their enemies before the battle. However, the various forms in which it appears in the historiography are undoubtedly later fiction.<sup>89</sup> One characteristic of the messenger story is clear before all others: it is the external frame for expositions on state politics and on character and aims of Islam. In order to be able to put into relief the essential features of the theory [289] contained within the type of messenger story under discussion here,<sup>90</sup> it will be necessary to bring to mind once more its main characteristics.<sup>91</sup> The Muslim messenger, who as a rule appears as the representative of all the Muslims, is received by his opponent, the representative of the heathens,<sup>92</sup> with the greatest possible display of pomp. The messenger's own attire and demeanour is simple, and he is not at all impressed by the display; on the contrary, his manner shows clearly that he does not think much of pomp and majestic behaviour. The leader of the heathens begins the dialogue by asking the messenger why he and his companions have come to this place at all, then stating that he remembers their weakness and neediness<sup>93</sup> from the old days,<sup>94</sup> and suggesting that they had better leave again.<sup>95</sup> While the messenger does admit freely that the 'arab used to be indeed feeble and needy, he points out that this state of things changed completely after the Prophet's mission<sup>96</sup> the consequence of which was that his followers can now claim the property of the heathens as theirs, and count on success in military enterprises. In some instances the messenger adds the call to convert to Islam (*da'wa*) to his mention of the Prophet's mission; after this the negotiations are cut short<sup>97</sup> and the battle begins.

Here the useless and despicable pomp of the heathens is contrasted with the ideal of the simplicity of the followers of Islam. In addition to this, however, it is made clear that the power of the heathens and their wealth is useless

<sup>89</sup> Cf. also Wellhausen, op. cit., p.76 and n.2, and Margoliouth, op. cit., p.122f.

<sup>90</sup> Concerning the two types of messenger stories cf. p.13 above.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. the parallel passages quoted at n.71 on p.14 above.

<sup>92</sup> Admittedly, Persian heathens; the isnāds of the messenger stories also point to Iraq, in particular to Kūfa.

<sup>93</sup> In some instances their moral inferiority is mentioned as well.

<sup>94</sup> This is the place where he sometimes also points out that those who are now Muslims used to be the receivers of charity from his people.

<sup>95</sup> In some instances he adds here that if they do leave, he would be willing to support them with food (cf. n.94).

<sup>96</sup> A parallel instance can be found in Bayhaqī (Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad), *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*, ed. Fr. Schwally (Gießen 1902), p.299.

<sup>97</sup> There is also a version in which the infidels (or some of them) are most impressed with the messenger's manner. The negotiations are broken off all the same.

especially because the necessary consequence of the Prophet's mission is that those who accept him, no matter how poor and powerless they are, will overcome the heathens and take possession of their wealth. Briefly, the theory expounded here is that Islam implies that the infidels will be dispossessed and consequently powerless, a theory which we also find elsewhere in Islamic writings (especially [290] in the *ḥadīth*)<sup>98</sup> and which, with this degree of rigor, must have been developed as a consequence of the first great conquests and by no means was their ideological basis.

It is even possible that the messenger story contains not only a theoretical definition of the relationship between Islam and heathenism, but that it presents an opinion concerning an internal Muslim problem. It is remarkable how sharply all the activities of the pre-Islamic Arabs are condemned in the story. It is the heathen general who first utters this condemnation, but the messenger admits to its being justified and indeed emphasises it even more strongly. His only argument against the infidel is that everything changed after the rise of Islam. He thus admits that the power and superiority of the Muslim community is by no means based on any national, i.e. Arab, superiority: the Arabs are now superior to the infidels because they are Muslims, not because the Arab people possess such remarkable qualities. It is likely that this emphasis on Arab inferiority and on the fact that only the religion of Islam is responsible for the power and invincibility of the Muslim community was especially in the interest of the non-Arab Muslims, the *mawālī*, who converted later.<sup>99</sup> Consequently the messenger story might contain a polemic by the *mawālī* against the Arab warrior class who initially ruled the Islamic state.<sup>100</sup>

We have already mentioned that there are other versions of this story in which the messenger may invite the infidels to embrace Islam at the end of their conversation. It is not necessary to consider this *da'wa* any further here; it only needs to be pointed out that it most probably does not belong with the type of messenger story under discussion but is a later addition. This is supported primarily by the way in which it is transmitted. There are, on the

<sup>98</sup> Some examples can be found in A. Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und Heiliger Kampf in Islam und Christentum*. Beiträge zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Kreuzzüge, in "Bonner Historische Forschungen", ed. M. Braubach, vol. 28 (Bonn 1966) p.19f.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. R. Hartmann, *Islam und Nationalismus*, Abhandlung der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1945/6, philosophisch-historische Klasse No. 5 (Berlin 1948), p.9f.

<sup>100</sup> It must be remembered that in one version of the messenger story (Tabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2269, 12ff.) the behaviour of the messenger in the infidel camp is described as being boorish rather than disdainful of pomp. Similarly the Persians are said to have 'sensible ideas and good manners' (*lahum āra' wa-ādāb*).

one hand, messenger stories in the tradition which contain nothing beyond the invitation of the Muslim messenger to the infidels to convert to Islam (or to pay *jizya*, [291] or to take their chance and fight).<sup>101</sup> On the other hand there are stories in which the messenger presents victory over the infidels as a result exclusively of the Prophet's mission, without offering them the opportunity of embracing Islam.<sup>102</sup> And it is really much more probable that the hybrid form was a result of a later combination of the two types of story, than that the two types should have emerged from a messenger story which originally contained both those elements. In addition, the concepts of the objectives the Muslim conquerors pursue with their war on the infidels, upon which the two types of stories are based, are radically different. In the *da'wa* type of the story the intentions on which the Muslim conquests are based are – at least partly – missionary, while their object in the other type of story is purely to conquer the infidels and expand the power of the Islamic state. It is exceedingly improbable that two so contrary opinions should originally have stood side by side in one and the same story.

Finally, it is usually Mughīra b. Shu'ba who is the Muslims' messenger, as in the type of messenger story under discussion here.<sup>103</sup> This may well be reminiscent of the historical fact that Mughīra did indeed play a not unimportant role in the Prophet's missions to the tribes of the Arabian peninsula; he appears frequently as either writer or witness<sup>104</sup> in the relevant mission documents of the Prophet, which are probably authentic, at least in their basic content.<sup>105</sup>

Similarly the topos of 'crossing over' towards the enemy may well be based on a true historical event. However, it will be difficult to determine the original place, i.e. the event during which this information had not yet become a topos. We might consider the 'battle of the bridge', because in that case the 'crossing' a river (the Euphrates) was indeed a determining factor in the battle action, but [292] this attribution is uncertain. There is still another possible explanation of this topos. There is an account of a single combat between a

<sup>101</sup> Such as e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2019, 12ff; 2020, 2ff.; 2022, 8ff.; 2039, 15ff.; 2040, 14ff.; 2053, 15ff.; 2097, 16ff.; I (5), p.2435, 10ff.; 2441, 3ff.; 2585, 7ff.; Sa'īd b. Bitrīq (Eutychios of Alexandria), *Naẓm al-jawhar*, ed. L. Cheikho CSCO Scriptores Arabici Series III, Vol.VII (Beirut–Paris 1909), part 2, p.10, 11ff.; 25, 6ff. We could easily find more examples.

<sup>102</sup> Ain, e.g., our *Iṣfahān-Nihāwand* account and in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2236, 17ff.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. p.13 above, and notes 70 and 71.

<sup>104</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* (ed. 1905ff.), I, 2, p.21, 22 (three times), 23 (twice), 24, 36, 85. [The content of this note and note 105 were reversed in the German original. – Transl.]

<sup>105</sup> Cf. M. V. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford 1956), p.336 and 345; A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed* (London 1932), p.8f.



Muslim and an infidel before the battle – which was a frequent occurrence in early Islamic times<sup>106</sup> – which states that the two combatants agreed before their fight who should attack first.<sup>107</sup> The wording of this agreement is very nearly exactly the same as the negotiation concerning the ‘crossing over’ (cf. *qāla: immā an taḥmila ‘alayya wa-immā an aḥmila ‘alayka; fa-qāla: aḥmilu ‘alayka* (‘he said: either I shall attack you, or you shall attack me: and he said, I shall attack you’) (before the single combat) and *qāla: immā an ta’buru ilaynā wa-immā an na’bura ilaykum; fa-qāla Abū ‘Ubayd: bal na’buri ilaykum* (‘either you cross over towards us, or we cross over towards you, and Abū ‘Ubayd said: indeed, we shall cross over towards you’) (in a version of the battle of the bridge)).<sup>108</sup> If we presume that before a single combat an agreement of the kind was generally the custom, we might say that our topos evolved out of the transference of a single combat formality onto the military engagement of two armies.<sup>109</sup> However, this assumption will have to remain a hypothesis as well.

The same arguments valid in the case of ‘crossing over’ also apply to the motifs of the enemies chained together, the triple signal for the attack, and the order of succession. They most likely do have a real historical basis, but so far it has not been possible to determine this exactly. A Muslim army may well have seen warriors among the enemies who were chained together;<sup>110</sup> a triple signal may well have been used – whether three shakes of the standard or, in a more religious version, triple *takbīr*; and possibly a general appointed one or more successors in case of his death, all these are occurrences one would not simply fabricate. Where and when these events really took place, however, must remain uncertain. We would not even be able to say with any certainty that these events took place at the time of the first conquests, as claimed by the tradition; they might just as well be of a much more recent date and were backdated to the early time – for whatever reason. We must not, however, be led to conclude under any circumstances that the repeated [293] mention made of the chains, the triple signal and the order of succession is proof that these were common practices or events. The fact that they are used in our account, which has been recognised to be fictitious and free from any authenticity, should be sufficient proof that they were used, if not exclusively,

<sup>106</sup> Cf. e.g. N. Fries, *Das Heerwesen der Araber zur Zeit der Omayyaden nach Ṭabarī* (Tübingen 1921), p.80.

<sup>107</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I/2639, 5f. (the passage concerning the other version of the battle for Iṣfahān; Abū Nu’aym, *Iṣbahān* (quoted edition), p.25, 11f. (the same tradition).

<sup>108</sup> For the reference and parallels see p.14 above, nn.72–75.

<sup>109</sup> If the agreement was not part of the formalities surrounding single combat, it would, of course, also be possible for the dependence to be the other way around.

<sup>110</sup> Apparently among the Persians, to whom this custom is ascribed in Muslim sources; but it is impossible to control the information, as there are no Sassanid sources.

as topoi. Repeated use of a topos does not, however, mean that the events reported did in fact take place repeatedly.<sup>111</sup>

There are two possible explanations for the ḥadīth which has the Prophet recommending an evening attack. It might contain a grain of truth in that Muḥammad may indeed have recommended an evening attack once, but of course it is out of the question that he ever suggested it should be a rule. Or it could have been fabricated, probably with the intention of justifying retrospectively either a single event or a practice of the kind.

Finally, the list of famous participants. It is most uncertain whether this topos in its different variants can be traced back to any historical events at all. Their tendency, however, is quite clearly visible. The authors intended to invest military events of the early days with a certain solemnity by having famous people taking part in them.<sup>112</sup> There are no authentic reports to be found, because during the time of the first conquests people were not interested to know which of the Prophet's Companions took part in which battles. The question only acquired importance later, when the *aṣḥāb* had become 'saints' of Islam, a quality not attributed to them, as a rule, during the first decades after the Prophet's death.

Having analysed the Iṣfahān-Nihāwand account we can draw several conclusions for the source criticism, into which we must now look in conclusion.

[294] It goes without saying that our account is completely worthless as a source for the battle for the city of Iṣfahān, and its value as a source for the battle for Nihāwand is, of course, the same. However, the other Nihāwand traditions which contain one or more of the narrative motifs of our account, should also be used only with great caution as sources for this event. For if some individual commonplaces can be found in them it is not really far-fetched to assume that they might contain others, even though those may not be recognisable as such at first sight. The most important factor for their value as sources is to which extent their content is determined by the provable topoi. The same applies to the other *futūḥ* traditions in which elements from our account can be found. The reliability of quite a large number of traditions is thus called into doubt by the analysis of our Iṣfahān-Nihāwand account.

<sup>111</sup> This is a fact that is not taken into consideration sufficiently by any means in modern historiography on the subject of early Islamic times; which has led to a number of erroneous conclusions. Two examples are the 'collections' by Fries, *Das Heerwesen der Araber...* (see p.22 above, n.106), and L. H. Beckmann, *Die muslimischen Heere der Eroberungszeit. Das Instrument der Ausbreitung des Islam, sein Aufbau, seine Gliederung, seine Führung und sein Einsatz* (622–51). Diss. phil. Hamburg (typed) 1951.

<sup>112</sup> Another example is to be found in Wellhausen, *Prolegomena* (see p.18 above, n.87) p.63.

Furthermore, our examination of this account has established several leads for studying the methods of some transmitters, which are not without importance for the source critical study. We have already established that the Iṣfahān–Nihāwand account is a good example of how traditions were composed by selecting a number of more or less independent narrative motifs from the store of *futūḥ* traditions and then putting them together to form a larger whole.<sup>113</sup> This method – and we can be certain that there are more instances in early Islamic historiography – is not so much falsification of history based on certain tendencies, of whatever kind, but rather falsification based on editorial manipulation; i.e. it must not be ascribed to the politically biased reworking of authentic news, but to the assembling of heterogeneous pieces of tradition, rather like a photomontage. The conclusion we can draw from this, with reference to the understanding of history of some Muslim transmitters whose specialist field was the early time, is that they were less concerned about transmitting authentic information and more with drawing attractive and memorable images. These images could also, as can be seen clearly from our Iṣfahān–Nihāwand account, be used in a formulaic way to illustrate several events.<sup>114</sup> A tradition transmitted by Bukhārī shows clearly where historiography could end if based on this kind of perception of history.<sup>115</sup> It is composed of three narrative motifs of our account: Hurmuzān's advice, the messenger story (after a brief mention [295] that the army was sent out) and the ḥadīth about attacking in the evening. This tradition does not refer to any particular event, it is only a military expedition of the time of the Caliph 'Umar; historiography has lost all reference to facts and is only a universally valid example.

So far the conclusions we have drawn from the analysis of our account have been mostly negative, unless proving that something cannot possibly have happened as it is described in the sources can be counted as a positive for source criticism. Still, we can make a few genuinely positive statements, with reference to the study of the sources or – so to speak – the 'methodology' of assessing the sources. After all, we may glean from the present study that the analysis of individual traditions can achieve results. This path has so far been taken very infrequently;<sup>116</sup> the usual approach in source criticism has been to take the first great compilations by Ṭabarī, Balādhurī and others, or by their predecessors Sayf b. 'Umar, Abū Mikhnaḥ and others, in their

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<sup>113</sup> See p.12 above.

<sup>114</sup> See p.4ff. above.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted edition, II p.292f.

<sup>116</sup> One example from recent time is E. L. Petersen, *Alī and Mu'āwiyā in Early Arabic Tradition* (Copenhagen 1964).

entirety and aspire to a comprehensive assessment of a greater body of source material.<sup>117</sup> This approach is surely legitimate, especially if the compilers have already arranged the material at their disposal systematically and pragmatically. However, the study of individual traditions is advisable as well. Firstly, the compilations, which are after all not simply fiction, contain various kinds of traditions, good as well as bad. Secondly, there are larger groups of traditions which form a thematic unit inasmuch as they correspond regarding their subject, the idea of history on which they are based, or the style of presentation. However, seeing as these traditions are not found in one compilation only but will be met in the most varied places, it is only possible to detect them by taking individual traditions as the basis for a study. The groups of traditions referred to in turn could do with, indeed require a comprehensive assessment. Thus it is possible to say that by beginning with the compilations scholars attempt a comprehensive assessment of the most varied traditions, whereas by beginning with individual traditions scholars may achieve a comprehensive assessment of traditions that belong together.

It is a good principle for a historian, and one that cannot be challenged on principle, that he, if he wishes to discover more about an event, should compare [296] the different extant accounts concerning this event, and then draw his conclusions as to what really happened by finding the correspondences between accounts. Based on the analysis of our account this principle will have to be qualified in the case of the historian of the early Muslim conquests, for it is now obvious that there was a number of narrative motifs in the early *futūḥ* literature which were used again and again. Consequently if all we have are correspondences in different accounts, they will not justify any conclusions. Only the knowledge of the *entire* conquest literature will allow the scholar to decide whether in one particular case the correspondences between accounts are a sign of the authenticity of what is reported, or whether they are just a shared commonplace.

Having proved a number of topoi and tendencies in our account has another, purely practical result for source criticism. In the *futūḥ* literature and in other traditions about the time of the first four Caliphs, these and similar topoi and tendencies are certainly found in large numbers.<sup>118</sup> In my opinion it would be worthwhile to inquire further into these phenomena and compose a catalogue of the provable commonplaces and tendencies, thus furnishing at least *one* useful starting point for the assessment of the sources. A list of

<sup>117</sup> Such as in particular Wellhausen, *Prolegomena* (see p.18 above, n.87) p.4 and passim.

<sup>118</sup> This is merely an assertion at present. The author, who is currently engaged upon a more comprehensive study on the subject of early Islamic history (the first four Caliphs), will have to prove it in due course.

topoi would, firstly, allow us to see in which subject areas of tradition common-places are found most frequently; secondly, serve to recognise a substantial number of non-authentic traditions<sup>119</sup> and reject them. A compilation of political tendencies might furthermore lead to better recognition of authentic information, as the fact that a tradition contradicts the current politically biased opinion may well be a sign of its credibility.<sup>120</sup>

This article has been the critical study of only one tradition. If this study were extended to comprise the entirety of the sources about early Islamic history, the result would probably be that we would know much less about this time, but that little may perhaps be closer to the truth.

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<sup>119</sup> Non-authentic with reference to what they report. They are certainly valuable as sources for the circumstances under which they were composed. This, however, will have to be set aside for the time being.

<sup>120</sup> Whether this is indeed the case will have to be verified for the individual examples.

## CENTRALIZED AUTHORITY AND MILITARY AUTONOMY IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC CONQUESTS

*Fred McGraw Donner*

### **I Introduction: Some Thoughts on Centralization**

THE HISTORICAL works of the Islamic tradition portray the early Islamic conquests as the self-conscious and centrally managed expansion of a new state in the name of the new faith of Islam. According to this view, commitment to Islam provided the motive force underlying the conquests, and the leadership of the early Islamic community, headed by the Caliphs in Medina, coordinated virtually all aspects of the expansion, from the initial recruitment of troops to the placement of garrisons of Muslims following the successful conquest of a province.

This vision of the Islamic conquests embraces what we shall call, in more general terms, the “centralization thesis.” The main components of this

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\* I am indebted to the participants in the third Late Antiquity and Early Islam workshop, whose fertile suggestions strengthened this paper immensely, and whose criticisms of an earlier version spurred me to address some of its main weaknesses. Unfortunately, they are too numerous for me to single out for individual mention here. I am also grateful to Paul M. Cobb and Walter E. Kaegi for taking the time to read earlier drafts and for many helpful suggestions. This paper was first written in 1992, then revised in early 1993 and, slightly, in early 1994. In making revisions, however, I have not included literature appearing since 1992, with the sole exception of references to the revised edition of Albrecht Noth's *Quellenkritische Studien*, cited here as “Noth-Conrad” (see n. 22, below).

thesis can be identified as (1) the existence of some central concepts or mission motivating the conquerors; (2) the existence of a ruling élite dedicated to the principles of these central concepts; and (3) the existence of some plan of expansion in the name of the central concepts; and (4) the capacity of the ruling élite to realize the plan of expansion through direct and indirect commands.

The centralization thesis has been accepted in the main by many modern scholars, but it has also been challenged, sometimes fundamentally, by a variety of revisionist interpretations put forth over the past century or so. The objective of this essay is to consider the cogency of the various interpretations of the conquests that have been advanced by modern scholars, with particular reference to whether the conquests are viewed as “centralized” or “decentralized.” Before doing so, however, it will be useful to make some general observations about the notion of “centralization” that must be kept in mind when attempting to interpret the evidence for the early Islamic conquests.

Centralization means control of some process from “the centre” – in the traditional view of the Islamic conquests, control of the conquest movement by the Caliphs in Medina. In dealing with historically complex phenomena such as the Islamic conquest, however, the notion of centralization cannot be envisioned as half of a simple binary polarity, with complete “decentralization” as its opposite pole. Rather, it must be seen as a continuum. That is, we may be able to envision the Islamic conquests as falling in general somewhere along a broad spectrum of degrees of centralization. Indeed, we will probably need to draw a complex judgment on the issue of centralization, and to speak of certain aspects of the conquests as being relatively centralized, while other aspects are quite decentralized.

Moreover, we must recognize the existence of a hierarchy of levels or aspects of centralization – what, for simplicity, I shall term the *conceptual*, the *strategic*, and the *tactical* aspects. These can perhaps best be described by formulating them as questions: (1) Were the conquests the product of some centralized or unitary impulse or ideology? Did they have some central source of authority and some broad, overarching goal to which its participants felt themselves bound, even if the latter was perhaps vague or elastic?<sup>1</sup> If so,

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning, here, by “broad”, that it transcended the narrow interests of particular individuals.

we can speak of the conquests as having displayed *conceptual centralization*. If, on the other hand, the various events usually included under the rubric of the Islamic conquest were in fact motivated by different and unrelated causes and were not part of some larger conception, then we can consider the conquests to have been conceptually decentralized. (2) Did there exist some general military objectives and some general strategy for attaining these military objectives? Or (to put it another way), did the central authorities coordinate in some measure the activities of different war parties on various fronts? If so, we can speak of the conquests as having displayed strategic (or operational) centralization (we shall use either "strategic" or "operational" depending on whether the particular context of which we are speaking focuses primarily on planning or on implementation). If, on the other hand, the events of the Islamic conquest represent primarily the fruits of the individual initiative of various war-leaders who acted on their own authority without any direction from the "centre", then we must speak of the conquests as having been strategically decentralized. (3) Did there exist a close centralized control or implementation of tactics and logistics (of supply, communications, etc.) on various fronts or in specific encounters with the enemy? If so, we can speak of the conquests as having displayed tactical centralization.

Certain implications follow *a priori* from these logical distinctions among different degrees or aspects of centralization. One is that absence of centralization on one level does not necessarily imply an absence of centralization on the levels above it; rather, each level must be examined in its own right. In particular, we must avoid the pitfall of drawing conclusions about strategic or conceptual centralization on the basis of evidence that pertains to tactical matters. It is, for example, all too easy to ridicule the idea that the Caliphs in Medina could have controlled every detail of the conquests unfolding in distant provinces; but lack of Caliphal oversight over details of tactical disposition does not necessarily mean that the Caliphs had no strategic or operational oversight. Nor can it be used as evidence to conclude that the conquests lacked any unifying conceptual base, that they were not a "movement," but were merely a collection of unrelated incidents that were only retrospectively conceived of as parts of a larger whole.

Conversely – but, perhaps, somewhat less obviously – we can propose that any firm evidence for the existence of a given level of centralized control inescapably implies the existence of centralized control on all higher levels as



well. Coordination by a centralized authority of the activities of separate commanders (operational centralization in realizing a strategic plan), for example, requires that the central authority be motivated by some guiding concepts; for it is self-evident that there can be no coordination of activities without a purpose or goal in the pursuit of which things are to be coordinated.

From these considerations it becomes clear that there are only four logically valid types of interpretation for any conquest movement. In order of increasing degrees of centralization, they are:

*I. No centralization is found on the conceptual, strategic, or tactical levels.* That is, the character of the conquest as a coordinated movement is denied.

*II. Conceptual centralization is present, but neither strategic or tactical centralization is found.* In other words, there is a general commitment to some common idea or doctrine, but there is either no unified leadership to implement it, or no effective mechanisms of implementation available to the leadership. Implementation is, in other words, totally haphazard, and under the free control of independent local commanders acting in the name of a set of common concepts, but without any coordination among them and as each interpreted the dictates of those concepts on his own.

*III. Conceptual centralization and strategic centralization are present, but not tactical centralization.* According to this scheme, the leadership of the movement is able to mobilize subordinate forces and shape general strategic policy in the name of the unifying concepts.

*IV. Centralization is found on all levels – conceptual, strategic, and tactical.* Virtually every aspect of the conquest is controlled and managed from the centre by the ruling élite.

Let us now review some salient interpretations of the early Islamic conquests to see where they stand in relation to this logical typology.

## II. Divergent Interpretations: a Typology

A significant number of modern interpreters of the early Islamic conquests have accepted the main outlines of the traditional Islamic “centralizing thesis,” holding to the general notion of a set of central motivating concepts and a

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centralized execution directed, loosely at least, from the centre in Medina.<sup>2</sup> These interpretations correspond to type III in the typology sketched above.

Modern versions of the centralizing thesis, when compared to their analog in the traditional Islamic sources, can usually be seen to involve adjustments or shifts of emphasis that modify it in ways that are minor, from the point of view of our analysis, however revolutionary they may be in other respects. For example, the notion that the movement was sparked by some motivating concept or mission may be adopted, but in some cases the nature (but not the existence) of that mission is called into question: where the Islamic tradition sees the motivating factor as the pure early Islam, others may adduce political or other motivations instead.<sup>3</sup> These interpretations, then, emphasize the importance of conceptual centralization, and usually follow the Islamic sources also in seeing a large measure of strategic (operational) centralization. The issue of tactical centralization is usually not raised explicitly, or is not dealt with in depth, and as far as I know no modern interpretation has proposed that the Islamic conquests displayed complete Caliphal control on both the strategic and tactical levels (type IV), although the Islamic tradition itself routinely suggests this.<sup>4</sup>

Already in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, some western authors were raising objections to certain aspects of the centralizing thesis of the type III variety. Building on the work of Hugo Winkler, for example, Leone Caetani advanced the view that the expansion of Arab rule was largely the result of ecological factors – particularly climatic

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples* (New York, 1960), 49-62 [German original 1939]; Laura Veccia-Vaglieri, "The Patriarchal and Umayyad Caliphates," in *The Cambridge History of Islam* I (Cambridge, 1970), 58-60; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974), I, 200-211; Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981); Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 1986), 59; John Walter Jandora, *The March from Medina: a Revisionist Study of the Arab Conquests* (Clifton, N.J., 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Among the most striking cases of this is Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism* (Cambridge, 1977). Radical as the religious implications of the book are, however, it nonetheless sees the conquests as the result of implementing a central mission.

<sup>4</sup> Jandora, *The March from Medina*, pays more attention than most works to matters of military tactics and organization. A few general comments are offered by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Abū Ghazzāla, *Al-Intiṣārāt al-'arabiya al-'uṣmā fī ṣadr al-islām: dirāsā 'an fann al-ḥarb al-'arabī* (Cairo, 1403/1983), 33-47 (on weaponry) and 48-52 (on military organization), but despite its subtitle this work offers virtually no analysis of military organization or its development.

change and population increase – which resulted in economic distress and consequent emigration.<sup>5</sup> This “ecological thesis”, as we may term it, proved very popular, and was embraced by many later writers. A typical expression of it is the following passage by a leading scholar from a book intended for a general audience: “Initially the great conquests were an expansion not of Islam but of the Arab nation, driven by the pressure of overpopulation in its native peninsula to seek an outlet in the neighboring countries. It is one of the series of migrations which carried the Semites time and again into the Fertile Crescent and beyond.”<sup>6</sup> According to the ecological thesis, the early Caliphs were merely riding the tiger of the expansion of the Arab peoples, over which they had little real control, at least at the outset. It is for this reason that proponents of the ecological thesis often prefer to speak of the “Arab conquests”, rather than the “Islamic conquests.” The view that the conquests were essentially more “Arab” than “Islamic” was partly rooted in the observation of an undeniable fact, that the conquests were not carried out primarily to secure the religious conversion to Islam of the conquered populations, at least beyond the Arabian peninsula. For, as is well known, the conquerors were content to collect tribute from non-Muslim religious communities outside Arabia that tendered their submission, and to leave them free to continue in their former faiths.

Many – indeed, almost all – of the scholars who adopted the ecological thesis to explain the Islamic conquests continued to adhere to aspects of the centralization thesis; for example, they often continued to describe how the Caliphs dispatched forces, coordinated strategy, and mobilized resources for the conquests, while positing ecological factors as the underlying cause of the conquests. That is, they seem to have introduced the ecological thesis as a kind of modification of the centralization thesis, rather than as a total repudiation of it, perhaps feeling that it provided a way to explain the origins of the

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<sup>5</sup> Leone Caetani, *Studi di Storia Orientale* I (Milan, 1911), 133-38, 369-71; restated with, if anything, greater force by Henri Lammens, *Le berceau de l'Islam* (Rome, 1914), 117-21 and 174-77. A variant of the ecological thesis is developed in M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History A.D. 600-750 (A.H. 132): a New Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1971). He argues that Muḥammad's activities created an economic recession that forced the Arabs to raid neighbouring territories, resulting in their “unintentionally acquiring an empire” (p. 14). For further discussion of these theories, see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 3-7.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (rev. ed., New York, 1960), 55-56.

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conquest movement that was, in their view, more “scientific.”<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, seeing the conquests primarily as an Arab conquest neatly glosses over the fact that the conquests began with the forcible subjugation of many Arabian tribes by the Medinese leadership.

There is also a deeper problem inherent in such “hybrid” interpretations. Stripped to its essentials, the ecological thesis is nothing less than the denial that a mission or central set of concepts played any causative rôle in the Islamic conquests – it asserts, after all, that the conquests were “really” generated by population pressure and other historical and economic forces rather than by conceptual factors. That is, the ecological thesis belongs to type I in our typology of interpretations. The coordination of strategy, dispatch of commanders, and other operational features, on the other hand, belong to what we have termed strategic centralization, which is found only in interpretations of type III or IV. Yet, we have shown in the preceding section that the existence of strategic and operational centralization logically requires the existence of conceptual centralization. Hybrid interpretations that combine an ecological thesis with some elements of the centralization thesis seem to me, in other words, to embrace a fatal contradiction, for the two theses are logically incompatible. The hybrid “ecological-centralizing” interpretation, in short, does not conform to any of the four logically valid typological variants, and must be rejected. This does not mean that ecological factors played no part in the events of the conquest era, but in dealing with them we must either embrace the ecological thesis whole-heartedly and dispense entirely with any talk of centralized control by the Caliphs over what is usually called the Arab or Islamic conquests, or reduce ecological factors to the role of supporting elements abetting the process of Arab migrations once the conquests had already begun.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For example, Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (8th ed., London, 1964), or Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, 55, who speaks of the conquest both as a migration of the Arab nation and as something in which the Arab leadership employed conscious strategy and provided reinforcements and supplies for their troops. See also Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam* (New York, 1968); Shaban, *Islamic History*; Edmond Rabbath, *La conquête arabe sous les quatre premiers califes (11/632-40/661)* (Beirut, 1985), I, 13-26, who sees ecological factors in combination with the new faith of Islam as decisive.

<sup>8</sup> I have offered more detailed objections to some of the specific assumptions of the ecological thesis in *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 3-8.

Very few scholars have chosen the first option and attempted to discard the centralization thesis in all its aspects; as we have seen, many attempted to reconcile aspects of the centralizing view with the ecological thesis. Recently, however, there has appeared a radically revisionist view of the Islamic conquests that we can call the *accidental* thesis. It clearly belongs among type I interpretations. Its proponents not only deny that the events of the conquest (as related in the traditional sources) were coordinated by the Caliphs as part of a coherent movement; they also deny the existence of any centralizing concepts or mission and doubt that many of the major events of the conquest, as related in the traditional sources, took place at all. This position is clearly staked out in a recent article, whose authors, on the basis of seventh-century Syriac, Greek, and Armenian sources, "conclude that the local sources written before the early eighth century provide no evidence for a *planned invasion* of Arabs from the Peninsula, nor for great battles which crushed the Byzantine army; nor do they mention any Caliph before Mu'āwiyah....The picture the contemporary literary sources provide is rather of raids of the familiar type; the raiders stayed because they found no military opposition....[W]hat took place was a series of raids and minor engagements, which gave rise to stories among the Arab newcomers of How We Beat the Romans; these were later selected and embellished in late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd times to form an Official History of the Conquest."<sup>9</sup> According to this more radically revisionist view, the very notion of a conquest movement is an

<sup>9</sup> J. Koren and Y. Nevo, "Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies," *Der Islam* 68 (1991), 87-101, at 100. See also Moshe Sharon, "The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land," in Sharon (ed.), *Pillars of Smoke and Fire: the Holy Land in History and Thought* (Johannesburg, 1986), 225-35, esp. 226-27, who argues that "Islam" had no unified beginning, and may have had several prophets, and suggests that local communities of *mu'minūn* (believers) simply seized power when the Byzantine and Sasanian empires collapsed. Even in some of the older literature, however, we find suggestions that the first steps in the conquest may have been, essentially, accidental; Carl Heinrich Becker's magisterial essay "Die Ausbreitung der Araber," in his *Islamstudien*, I (Leipzig, 1924), 70, expresses this idea, as does Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 8th ed., 144-45, although Hitti introduces Islam as a conceptual factor, contending that it forced Arab tribes to stop raiding one another, and so helped redirect their raids outward. Walter E. Kaegi, Jr. has pointed out to me that — *pace* Koren and Nevo — some "local" sources written, at the latest, at the very beginning of the eighth century C.E. (end first century A.H.) do make reference to major battles of the conquest era, notably Anastasius the Sinaite, *Sermo adversus Monotheletas* (ed. Karl-Heinz Uthemann, Turnhout, 1985), 60 (paras. 3.1.86-88); on the date of this work, see John Haldon, "The Works of Anastasius of Sinai," in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I: Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 107-47, at 113 (personal communication, Walter E. Kaegi, Jr.).

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historiographical myth, created during the first few Islamic centuries, that was projected back onto a set of historical events that were much more haphazard, unplanned, and accidental than the conquest traditions would have us believe.<sup>10</sup> One is reminded here of the recent revisionist interpretation of the Dorian invasions in Greece that views them not as the immigration and conquest by a new group, but as a retrospective historiographical myth created to explain the emergence to prominence in various parts of Greece of once-lowly peoples.<sup>11</sup>

The question of what mission or concepts, if any, mobilized the conquests is a vitally important one, but is properly beyond the scope of this volume, which focuses on the problem of states and their material infrastructure in the transition from late antiquity to early Islam. Tactical centralization, on the other hand, given the prevailing conditions of the conquest era, is neither expected nor likely to have characterized the conquests. This only leaves the question of strategic and operational centralization, which is central to the present volume's focus, so we shall restrict our remaining comments to the problem of strategic centralization in the early Islamic conquests, taking it for granted for the moment that there was some kind of conceptual basis underlying the conquest movement, even if we are not yet sure exactly how we wish to characterize it. Our focus here on strategic centralization is justified, moreover, because most of the interpreters of the conquests to date have assumed the existence of motivating concepts, but disagreed sharply on the degree of strategic and operational centralization. Just how much operational control did the Caliphs have over the events of the conquests unfolding throughout the Near East? In what measure were the

<sup>10</sup> The most detailed analysis of the historiographical problems of the conquest literature are the works of Albrecht Noth cited in n. 22, below. Noth is not as skeptical about the basic events of the conquest as, say, Koren and Nevo are; but Noth has made the clearest statement of the salvation-historical character of the conquest tradition. It may be, however, that Koren and Nevo pursue some implications of Noth's ideas, even beyond the point intended by Noth: Noth's general reconstruction of the *events* (as opposed to the historiography) of early Islamic history can be found in his chapter "Früher Islam," in Ulrich Haarmann, ed., *Geschichte der arabischen Welt* (München: C. H. Beck, 1987), 11-100. On the other hand, even a scholar as generally traditional in his orientation as Hitti (*History of the Arabs*, 145) pointed out parallels between the conquest accounts and Biblical "salvation history."

<sup>11</sup> A convenient summary of the various interpretations in this debate, with recent bibliography, is provided in Jean-Nicolas Corvisier, *Aux origines du miracle grec. Peuplement et population en Grèce du Nord* (Paris, 1991), 7-16. The closest parallel is perhaps the interpretation advanced by Sharon, "The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land."

conquests of various provinces the result of conscious strategic policies implemented by the ruling élite, and in what measure were they the serendipitous consequences of uncontrolled tribal raiding parties or the action of forces controlled by essentially autonomous war leaders, acting on their own initiative and for their own purposes, and not for those of the Caliphs and the nascent Islamic state? It is to a consideration of these issues that we must now turn.

### III. Problems of Strategic and Organizational Centralization

The notion that the conquests displayed a significant measure of strategic and operational centralization is, as we have seen, crucial to the traditional interpretations of the conquests. Three different objections have been raised to this notion. They are the difficulty of communications, the case of 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and his role in the conquest of Egypt, and – by far the most complex – a general historiographical critique of the conquest narratives. Let us look at each in turn.

#### *A. Communications during the Conquests.*

The difficulty (real or assumed) of communications in the early medieval period is sometimes taken as a reason why the conquests could not have been, in operational terms, a centralized movement, since strategic and operational centralization would require the Caliphs to be able to communicate with their commanders with some efficiency. Noth, for example, has argued that the early Muslims lacked this capacity, stating that it would take 20 days for messengers to cover the 1000 km separating Medina from the fronts in Syria and Iraq, so that a single exchange of letters would require forty days' time and a complex negotiation many months.<sup>12</sup>

It is, however, hardly unreasonable to assume that a fast messenger could cover the distance of 1000 km in less than twenty days. Musil relates instances in which riders were able to cover 300 km in roughly sixteen hours, and even more rapid communications can be imagined if we assume that the early Muslims maintained a few courier posts, with fresh riders and fresh, fast

<sup>12</sup> Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien*, 72-80, esp. 72-73; Noth-Conrad, 78-80.

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mounts, between Medina and the armies in Iraq or Syria.<sup>13</sup> Such rates would make it possible for couriers from Syria to reach Medina and bring a reply in a week or even less, certainly quickly enough to take care of general operational coordination. Obviously, tight Caliphal control of all details on all fronts would be out of the question, but broader strategic planning and operational oversight is not thereby ruled out.

In any case, the communications time-lag faced by the early Islamic state certainly compares favorably with later colonial ventures such as the Portuguese or British expansions in the Indian Ocean. Both were carried out by forces operating on the basis of general orders in an environment where communications and news required months to reach home base in Europe, but there can be no doubt that the Portuguese colonies in Asia and the British occupation of India were, in at least strategic terms, sanctioned and in some measure coordinated from Lisbon and London; they were not, at any rate, "accidental" occupations undertaken by free-wheeling commanders completely unbeknownst to higher authorities in Europe, however loose the latter's day-to-day knowledge of and control over operations must have been. Communications limitations demanded that Muslim commanders in the field handle many situations that arose as they saw fit, and we may, with Noth, wish to take a sceptical view of reports of lengthy negotiations between commanders in the field and Caliphs in Medina arising out of specific local situations during the conquest. But operational coordination of a broadly conceived strategy for the Islamic conquests by the Caliphs in Medina certainly seems to have been feasible given the prevailing communications of the day.

*B. 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ and the Conquest of Egypt.*

A few of the accounts about the invasion of Egypt by 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ describe him as having acted entirely on his own authority, and some scholars have taken these accounts to be vestiges of an archaic layer of tradition reflecting

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<sup>13</sup> Alois Musil, *Northern Negd* (New York, 1928), 145. William Lancaster of the British Institute at Amman recounted reports, dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, of a fast camel travelling from Damascus to al-Jawf in 24 hours – a distance of 600 km. (comment during Workshop discussions.)



lack of centralized Caliphal coordination of the conquests.<sup>14</sup> This interpretation rests on the observation that later Islamic tradition had a tendency to exaggerate the degree of centralized control enjoyed by the Caliphs – what we can call the “centralizing bias.”<sup>15</sup> Given the existence of this centralizing bias, it is argued, any surviving accounts that show a commander – in this case, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ – acting independently must be older than the appearance of this centralizing bias, and hence must reflect more closely the original conditions prevailing in the conquest era.

A closer look at these accounts suggests, however, that they provide only dubious or ambiguous evidence for a lack of strategic centralization. The assumption that accounts relating ‘Amr’s independence of action antedate the centralizing bias ignores the fact that there were some historiographical circles in late Umayyad times that were glad to paint ‘Amr as a villain,<sup>16</sup> and once the centralizing bias was current, accounts portraying ‘Amr as acting on his own and in defiance of Caliphal authority would be just right for such vilification. For this reason, the “centralized” versions of the invasion of Egypt – in which ‘Amr invades on ‘Umar’s orders, rather than on his own authority – may well be just as old as, or even older than, the accounts in which he invades Egypt on his own.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore very risky to claim that these accounts about ‘Amr’s independence reflect an old tradition based on an historical reality of decentralization.

In any case, even if ‘Amr did invade Egypt on his own, we must still ask whether ‘Amr’s presumed independence of action can be taken to reflect a general lack of strategic or operational centralization. Might it not have been a particular case of disobedience, and if so, is it reasonable to take it as characteristic of the whole conquest movement? Is it not misleading to generalize from this one example of military autonomy – assuming that it is an example? For, we find reports of such independence or defiance of Caliphal authority for no other commander of the early conquest period on any other front – and there were many of them. The only apparent parallel we might

<sup>14</sup> The most detailed analysis is again found in Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien*, 162-64; Noth-Conrad, 182-84.

<sup>15</sup> See below.

<sup>16</sup> Erling Ladewig Petersen, *‘Alī and Mu‘āwiya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Odense, 1974 [orig. 1964]), especially 33-34, 45, 48-49, 53-54.

<sup>17</sup> I plan to provide a more detailed analysis of the ‘Amr traditions in a separate study.

point to, the independent raiding of the Iraqi countryside by al-Muthannā ibn Hāritha and tribesmen of Shaybān, is really quite different from the case of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. For one thing, it is not clear that al-Muthannā, when he embarked on his raiding, had any formal relationship with the Islamic state; he appears in many accounts merely to be a local tribal chieftain who was raiding an area adjacent to his traditional tribal territory.<sup>18</sup> In this he stands in marked contrast to ‘Amr, who according to every account had been appointed by the Caliph to lead an army composed of men drawn from many tribes into territories far from their own homelands (and certainly distant from ‘Amr’s native town, Mecca). Whereas ‘Amr may have been an insubordinate agent of the state, in other words, al-Muthannā was an outsider – albeit one whose raiding activity, in close proximity to the campaigns of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd into Iraq, was soon co-opted by the Islamic state.<sup>19</sup>

An episode from ‘Amr’s later history in Egypt also raises doubts about the cogency of the argument that his invasion of the country reflects his unbridled autonomy as a military commander. Had ‘Amr in fact acted entirely on his own, with no Caliphal approval or control, one might expect that it would be impossible to dislodge him thereafter from the province that was, after all, in some sense his private conquest. ‘Amr’s dominant rôle in ruling Egypt after its conquest is well-known, of course; yet the Caliph ‘Uthmān did relieve him of his post as governor of Egypt (replacing him with his own foster-brother, ‘Abdallāh ibn Sa’d ibn Abī Sarḥ). Moreover, ‘Uthmān was apparently able to do so without undue difficulty – certainly no military force was needed to make ‘Amr relinquish his position. The fact that ‘Amr obviously resented the measure, and complained openly about it, makes all the more significant the fact that the Caliph could replace him as viceroy over Egypt.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, if we wish to find an example of an individual and his descendants thoroughly entrenched in a province during and immediately

<sup>18</sup> On al-Muthannā and his raiding see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “al-Muthannā b. Hāritha” (F. M. Donner); Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 181; *idem*, “The Bakr b. Wā’il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam,” *Studia Islamica* 51 (1980), 30, 34–35.

<sup>19</sup> There do exist accounts in which al-Muthannā is said to have come to Medina before engaging in any raiding in order to seek the caliph’s permission to do so. In this case, however, I suspect that such accounts may be later creations reflecting the *topos* of centralization.

<sup>20</sup> A convenient overview of the events is provided in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. “‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ” (A. J. Wensinck).

following the Islamic conquests, the best example is probably that of Syria – conquered, according to traditional sources, by several armies, one of which was led by the Umayyad Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān, who became its first governor; and governed, after Yazīd's death, by his younger brother Mu'āwiya. However, the implications of the Umayyads' long tenure of this governorship for the question of central authority and local autonomy are clouded by the fact that the Caliph 'Uthmān (r. 644-56 C.E.) was also an Umayyad, and hence not inclined to challenge Mu'āwiya's grip on Syria as he had challenged 'Amr's control of Egypt, since he relied so heavily on his kinsman's support.

### *C. The General Historiographical Critique.*

Another challenge to the centralization thesis rests predominantly on historiographical arguments and analysis. It has long been argued that the traditional Islamic sources present a vision of early Islamic history, including the early conquests, that is idealized and shaped to fit later dogmatic needs.<sup>21</sup> The conquest narratives in particular have been made the subject of detailed analysis by Albrecht Noth.<sup>22</sup> Noth has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that many narrative sources for early Islamic history are imbued with a marked tendency to present events – especially the events of the conquest – as centrally planned and regulated.<sup>23</sup> Even a cursory review of the traditional accounts about the Islamic conquests provides one with examples that confirm

<sup>21</sup> This view goes at least as far back as Ignaz Goldziher; see his *Muhammedanische Studien* 2 (Halle, 1890), 5 [= *Muslim Studies*, 2 (transl. by S. M. Stern, London, 1971), 19].

<sup>22</sup> Especially his monograph *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen, und Tendenzen frühislamischen Geschichtsüberlieferung*. Teil I: *Themen und Formen*. (Bonn, 1973) (= *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: a Source-Critical Study*. Second edition in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad. Translated by Michael Bonner, *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* 2, Princeton, 1994) (cited as "Noth-Conrad"). See also Noth's articles "Der Charakter der ersten großen Sammlungen von Nachrichten," *Der Islam* 47 (1971), 168-199; "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie," *ZDMG* 118 (1968), 274-96; "Zum Verhältnis von Kalifater Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in Umayyadischer Zeit. Die "Ṣulḥ"- "Anwa"-Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq," *Die Welt des Islams* 14 (1973), 150-62; "Die literarisch überlieferten Verträge der Eroberungszeit als historische Quellen für die Behandlung der unterworfenen Nicht-Muslims durch ihre neuen muslimischen Oberherrn," in Tilman Nagel et al., *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islam* I (Bonn, 1973), 282-314.

<sup>23</sup> The most explicit formulation is in Noth, "Der Charakter der ersten großen Sammlungen von Nachrichten." His *Quellenkritische Studien* is based on the assumption that the traditional sources exaggerate the degree of centralization. Cf. Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien*, 53-54, 57, 75-76, 174-181; Noth-Conrad 56-57, 61, 81-82, 196-204.

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the existence of this centralizing bias. Let us select one example at random by way of illustration – a relatively lengthy account coming via Ibn Ishāq (d. 151 A.H.), allegedly on the ultimate authority of an eyewitness to the early Islamic campaigns in Egypt under the command of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ.<sup>24</sup> This account relates how ‘Amr’s forces conquered villages surrounding Alexandria and describes ‘Amr’s negotiations with the “master” of Alexandria<sup>25</sup> to establish the terms according to which the city was brought under Muslim rule. It contains, however, many hints that it is a composition of relatively late date and of Egyptian origin. For example, the “master” of Alexandria addresses the Muslims using terms that reflect a sharp conceptual opposition between Muslims and Christians, and between Arabs on the one hand and Byzantines and Persians on the other: “I used to pay the *jizya* to parties who were more odious to me than you are, oh company of Arabs – to Persia and Byzantium.” Such sharp distinctions along these lines seem more likely to hail from the context of second-century A.H. Islamic juristic usage, however, rather than from the mouth of a non-Muslim figure of the early seventh century. The same can be said of the account’s systematic understanding of *jizya* to mean a head tax, which accords with later juristic usage but not with what documentary sources reveal about the first Islamic century.<sup>26</sup> This is reinforced by the account’s depiction of Egyptian captives being given their free choice to embrace Islam or to remain Christian and pay *jizya* – thus justifying collection of *jizya* by the state not on grounds of mere conquest, but on grounds of the personal choice of those subjected to the tax. Likewise, the account’s pronounced emphasis on establishing the tax status of the conquered districts via what has come to be known as “*ṣulḥ*-‘*anwa*” traditions is certainly

<sup>24</sup> The account is in al-Tabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden, 1879-1901) I, 2581-84 (*isnād*: Ibn Ḥumayd – Salama – Ibn Ishāq – al-Qāsim ibn Quzmān, a man of Egypt – Ziyād ibn Jaz’ al-Zubaydī).

<sup>25</sup> *Ṣāhib al-Iskandarīya*. It is not clear who this “master” was; perhaps the Coptic bishop of Alexandria, or the Byzantine official known as the *praefectus augustalis*, the effective civil ruler of Byzantine Egypt?

<sup>26</sup> On the confused tax practices in early Islamic Egypt, see Daniel C. Dennett, Jr., *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 1950), 65-115; Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, *Studies in the Genesis and Early Development of the Caliphal Taxation System* (Copenhagen, 1988), 79-131; Kosei Morimoto, *The Fiscal Administration of Egypt in the Early Islamic Period* (Kyoto, 1981).

the product of later juristic thought.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the account presents all decisions, even relatively minor ones, as having been referred back to the Caliph. As 'Amr is made to say when the "master" of Alexandria contacts him with an offer to pay *jizya* if 'Amr returns captives already taken from Alexandria's territory, "Behind me is a commander [*amīr*] without whose permission I cannot do anything." So the "master" of Alexandria and 'Amr agree to a cease-fire until a messenger can be sent to the Caliph and his response received. The Caliph's reply, when it comes, betrays too many later legal concerns of the kind mentioned above, and too much awareness of the later history of the Muslim community, to be plausible as an authentic document of the conquest period.

We would have to be credulous indeed to take at face value this account, which appears to be not, in fact, an eyewitness report dating from the conquest period but a working-through of later fiscal and religious concerns within the Islamic juristic tradition, fitted into the context of some very general understandings or commonly accepted notions of what had happened during the conquest period. In other words, some widely known fact, such as that 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ had led the Muslim conquerors into Egypt, was utilized to provide a plausible framework on which to hang material that ground the late first and early second-century jurists' axes. Accounts of this kind, which abound in the narrative literature about the conquests, do seem to me to be best explained as products of later legal thought, and they fit very well into Noth's picture of the workings of an historiographical "*topos* of centralization."

While accepting the existence of a centralizing bias, however, we should not allow ourselves unwittingly to adopt an "all-or-nothing" attitude about centralization. That is, the existence of the later centralizing bias does not necessarily mean that the conquests themselves displayed no centralization; to argue thus is to fall into the trap of seeing centralization as a simple binary polarity. Rather, we should consider the possibility that what the centralizing bias does is to exaggerate the degree of centralization during the conquests, and to exaggerate it perhaps in specific arenas only and not in others. It seems

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<sup>27</sup> On *ṣulḥ-ʿanwa* traditions, see Werner Schmucker, *Untersuchungen zu einigen wichtigen Bodenrechtlichen Konsequenzen der islamischen Eroberungsbewegung* (Bonn, 1972); Noth, *art. cit.*, n. 22.

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clear, for example, that the centralizing bias is very prominent in the arena of tax arrangements, where, as we have seen from the example just given, the first Caliphs and their commanders are portrayed as imposing systematic taxation regimes on conquered areas in a way that is belied by surviving documentation. Whether the accounts about other aspects of the conquests are so thoroughly affected by the centralizing bias, however, remains to be considered. In the remainder of this section, therefore, we shall examine briefly a number of different kinds of accounts that, like accounts about taxation, have a bearing on the question of strategic centralization and the range of validity of this centralizing bias.

One obvious indicator of a measure of centralized operational control of the conquests is coordination by the Caliphs of activities on different fronts. The traditional sources provide us with many examples of such coordination: Khālid ibn al-Walīd's march from Iraq to Syria, the veterans of Yarmūk joining the Muslim forces at al-Qādisiyya in Iraq, the troops of southern Iraq marching north to join their fellows at al-Qādisiyya,<sup>28</sup> or the veterans of Syria being sent to northern Syria and the Jazīra.<sup>29</sup> Related to these are many accounts that portray the Caliphs sending reinforcements or supplies to various commanders or fronts. For example, some accounts say that the Caliph 'Umar reinforced 'Amr shortly after he entered Egypt by dispatching a supporting force under al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām.<sup>30</sup> Others describe the Caliph 'Uthmān arranging for reinforcements to go to Armenia from both Syria and Iraq in response to a request from the military commander in Armenia, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama al-Fihri.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the Caliph 'Umar is said to have sent sheep and camels from the Ḥijāz to provision the Muslims at al-

<sup>28</sup> On these, see respectively Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 119-27, 207 and nn. 193 and 194 to chapter 4 (with many references), and 339 and n. 195 to chapter 4.

<sup>29</sup> Recently noted in Walter E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge, 1992), 149, with references to the main sources.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, I, 2084 (*isnād*: Sayf – Abū 'Uthmān Yazīd ibn Asīd al-Ghassānī – Khālid ibn Ma'dān and 'Ubāda ibn Nusayy); Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, photographic reproduction of Zāhiriyya library manuscripts ('Ammān, ca. 1988), XIII, 514, lines 9ff. (*isnād*: Khalīfa – al-Walīd ibn Hishām al-'Ajramī – his father – his grandfather, and 'Abdallāh ibn al-Mughīra – his father and others).

<sup>31</sup> On this episode see Najda Khammāsh, *Al-Shām fī ṣadr al-islām* (Damascus, 1987), 197-98.

Qādisiyya in Iraq.<sup>32</sup> Careful study of these and many other similar traditions is needed to decide whether they represent a tendency to exaggerate the degree of coordination analogous to the centralizing bias, and intended precisely to convey the false impression that there was some coordination among different fronts, or whether they reflect, in some degree, the actual conditions of the conquest period.<sup>33</sup> If Caliphal coordination and reinforcement can be demonstrated, it would certainly support the notion of strategic and operational centralization of the conquests.

Another phenomenon bearing on the question of centralization is the degree to which the Caliphs were able to remove military commanders from their posts and to replace them with new candidates of their own choice. The traditional sources for the conquest period describe how the Caliphs changed commander or governor in a province with, sometimes, marked frequency. Related to this is the replacement of commanders lost in battle (as in the case of Abū 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī at the Battle of the Bridge in Iraq) or lost to disease (as in the case of the 'Amwās plague).<sup>34</sup> Frequent or regular dismissal of established commanders must be considered an indication of a significant measure of centralized administrative control; at any rate, it argues against commanders and governors being so entrenched that they could effectively resist dismissal. Moreover, we have no record of any governor or commander before the outbreak of the first civil war in 656 C.E. who resisted dismissal and rebelled against the Caliphs in Medina. There are accounts of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd grumbling about his dismissal by 'Umar, and similarly 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ about his dismissal by 'Uthmān, but their opposition seems to have been verbal only.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), 255 (*isnād*: al-Wāqidī). Huge quantities of camel bones were discovered in archaeological strata datable to the conquest period at al-Rabadha in Saudi Arabia, presumably the result of large-scale slaughtering (Dr. Geoffrey King, personal communication). It is tempting to take this as evidence of a staging-point or supply-base for the early Islamic armies, but confirmation of this interpretation must await full publication of this material.

<sup>33</sup> Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien*, 114-15; Noth-Conrad 123-29, considers such accounts briefly, but is inconclusive regarding their significance.

<sup>34</sup> On Abū 'Ubayd and his successors, see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 195-96 and 202. On the 'Amwās plague and the replacement of Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān by his brother Mu'āwiya, see al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 139-41.

<sup>35</sup> On Khālīd, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2147-48 (Sayf); 2148-49 (Ibn Ishāq); 2149-50 (Ibn Ishāq). Like many of al-Ṭabarī's accounts about Khālīd, these have something of the character of moralizing tales. On 'Amr, see above, n. 20.

Similarly, there exist accounts that describe the Caliphs exercising some measure of restraint on the ambitions of governors, commanders, and their troops. Mu'āwīya, for example, as governor of Syria, petitioned 'Umar to let him make raids by sea, but the Caliph resisted this suggestion for some time and refused to permit naval raids against, among other targets, Cyprus.<sup>36</sup> 'Umar is said to have ordered Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās move his camp back to a site west of the Euphrates, rather than where he had stationed himself near the old Sasanian capital of al-Madā'in in the Iraqi alluvium, which might have been a more natural administrative location.<sup>37</sup> Numerous accounts tell of the Caliphs instructing tribal groups moving to the front not to settle in one place but rather to head for another about which they were less enthusiastic.<sup>38</sup>

Many accounts describe how the commanders of the early conquest armies forwarded a fifth of the booty to the Caliph in Medina, but these accounts may, in fact, belong to the complex of accounts relating to taxation growing out of the centralizing bias. However, only an extensive historiographical analysis of these numerous accounts can help us to understand their real date and provenance, and hence give us some idea of their reliability as evidence for the conquest period.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, G.-R. Puin has examined accounts describing the creation by the Caliph 'Umar of various *dīwān* or pay-register,<sup>40</sup> which distributed the booty among various categories of recipients, including especially the soldiers on active duty. The existence of this institution suggests some measure of administrative centralization and regulation closely tied to the military activities of the conquerors. It seems unreasonable to suppose that the same authorities who established a regular pay-system for troops in their armies would simultaneously be unconcerned with where those armies went or what they did in the field.

We may also find some evidence for operational centralization in the way the military institutions of the first Muslims are said, by the traditional

<sup>36</sup> E.g., al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 152-53; Khammāsh, *Al-Shām*, 201-202.

<sup>37</sup> See several accounts in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 2482-85.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., *ibid.*, I, 2183 (Sayf) and 2185-87 (Sayf and al-Sha'bī), on Bajīla being sent to Iraq rather than to Syria; 2187-88 (Sayf), similarly with Azd and Kināna.

<sup>39</sup> Such an analysis would be sufficient for a book and is far beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>40</sup> Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, *Der Dīwān von 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb. Ein Beitrag zur frühislamischen Verwaltungsgeschichte* (Diss. Bonn, 1970); see also Kennedy's paper in this volume.



sources, to have evolved. Various organizational and technical features would suggest that the early conquest campaigns were, in fact, parts of a centrally coordinated conquest movement, rather than isolated raids carried out by unrelated parties. These include (1) evidence that the campaigns of conquest were much larger in scale and duration than usual tribal raiding; (2) evidence that, unlike tribal raids, the conquest campaigns were not limited to clearly defined military objectives, but rather had an open-ended quality; (3) evidence that the military techniques employed by the forces were more elaborate, or required a greater level of skill or training, than the usual tribal raiding displayed; and (4) evidence that the forces involved were not simply tribal war-parties led by a tribal chiefs, but were to some extent organized in ways that transcended tribal ties. The first two items are clearly depicted in the traditional sources and need not detain us further here; the third, on the other hand, while potentially important, is difficult to examine adequately because our evidence for military technology and field organization of the early Islamic armies is sparse and often quite problematic.<sup>41</sup> This leaves for us to examine evidence for the organization of the early Muslim armies in ways that were independent of, or that transcended, tribal affiliation.

Many of the Prophet's military campaigns do not seem to have been organizationally more sophisticated than the small tribal raiding parties of pre-Islamic Arabia.<sup>42</sup> By the time the Muslims embarked on the invasion of Syria and Iraq, on the other hand, we are – if we can believe the traditional narrative sources at all – no longer dealing with the usual tribal raids, but with much larger and more elaborate undertakings. It is, of course, possible to argue that these large armies<sup>43</sup> were simply agglomerations of large tribal

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<sup>41</sup> The valiant effort to refine our understanding of conquest-era military phenomena made by Jandora in *The March from Medina* is noteworthy, but it seems to me that at many turns his presentation relies more on extrapolation of what he feels “should” or “must” have been the case, based on later Arabian or other military parallels, than it does on deduction from solid historical evidence.

<sup>42</sup> On this see Ella Landau-Tasseron, “Features of the Pre-Conquest Muslim Armies,” chapter 6 above.

<sup>43</sup> Large relative to what was familiar in the Arabian context, at least; as I have noted elsewhere, the armies were actually quite modest in size, the largest apparently being that at the Yarmūk in Syria (20,000-40,000 men); the army at al-Qādisiyya in Iraq probably numbered only between 6,000 and 12,000 men. See Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 133, 135, 140, 142 (different figures for the Yarmūk); 205-209 (Qādisiyya); 221. Cf. Jandora's estimates of 36,000 and 10,000 respectively, although he does not detail how he reaches these figures from the conflicting numbers given in the sources; Jandora, *March from Medina*, 68 and 62.

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units led by their own tribal chiefs, who simply served under the overall command of the Muslim general staff; we read frequently, for example, of large groups from one particular tribe or other fighting in various battles, apparently as tribal contingents,<sup>44</sup> and the reports about the settlement of the garrison-town of al-Kūfa in Iraq tell of tribal groups being assigned particular quarters or streets, where they resided together.<sup>45</sup> But there is also some evidence of military arrangements that cut across tribal lines, or measures that harnessed the solidarity of tribal groups in ways that benefited the state. Some military arrangements that may have cut across tribal lines were the organization of troops into ranks (*ṣufūf*) by weaponry (archers, lancers, etc.) and references to (still obscure) organizational or tactical units such as the "tens" (*a'shār*), *karādīs*, *katā'ib*, etc.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the Islamic state seems to have turned to its own advantage the authority of tribal chiefs over their kinsmen by securing the loyalty of such chiefs through special payments, grants of lands, and the like.<sup>47</sup> The Caliphs could also channel various administrative arrangements through the tribes, such as relying on a figure known as the '*arīf*' in each tribe to distribute payments ('*aṭā*') to the soldiers belonging to that tribe.<sup>48</sup>

As we saw at the beginning of this section, the centralizing tendency of the Islamic narrative sources is very palpable in many reports about tax arrangements supposedly made during the conquests. It is not nearly so clear, however, that in the many other arenas just surveyed the narrative material is exaggerated by, or even influenced by, the centralizing bias. Decisive definition of the exact range of applicability of the centralizing bias must await

<sup>44</sup> See the evidence for this compiled in Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 223, and Khammāsh, *Al-Shām*, 264-65, 356-57.

<sup>45</sup> Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 228-29 and 234-36. The basic references are al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2488-90 and 2495 (both related by Sayf ibn 'Umar); on this slender base of evidence rest the various reconstructions of early al-Kūfa, including the book of Hichem Djait, *Al-Kufa: naissance de la ville islamique* (Paris, 1986).

<sup>46</sup> On these arrangements and units see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 223-26; Jandora, *March from Medina*, 113-16; Khammāsh, *Al-Shām*, 359-61.

<sup>47</sup> On the use of such blandishments by the Islamic state of the conquest era, see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 255-63. Note also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2187-88 (Sayf), in which the tribal leader of Azd has to persuade his tribesmen to go to Iraq, as the caliph requested, rather than to Syria, where they wished to go; clearly the tribal chiefs' stature among their followers was an important resource used by the caliphs to maintain control of the tribesmen.

<sup>48</sup> On the '*irāfa*' (office of the '*arīf*') and registration of troops by tribe see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 237-39; Khammāsh, *Al-Shām*, 264-65, 356-58.

a much fuller historiographical analysis of the accounts in each of these arenas, a massive undertaking that is far beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, the various lines of evidence summarized above tentatively suggest that even allowing for some exaggeration due to centralizing bias, the strategic centralization of the early Islamic conquests is not merely an historiographical will-o'-the-wisp. It is true that reports of Caliphal control of all tactical details and accounts of systematic tax arrangements are exaggerated in the Islamic sources, but it nonetheless remains plausible to me to assume that the Caliphs enjoyed a good measure of influence and control over the conquests, both in setting general policy and in ensuring that it was implemented along lines agreeable to them.

There remains one final, general point about strategic and operational centralization to be made here. Strategic and operational centralization is essentially a question of relations between the central authorities and the first order of subordinates – generals in the field, in a military situation such as the conquests, or governors after the absorption of newly conquered territories into the state's domains. We can propose, as a general organizational principle, that the degree to which commanders in the field can be entrusted by the central authorities with implementing broad policy objectives is directly proportional to the degree to which the rulers and their subordinates constituted a coherent and homogeneous group. In thinking about the early Islamic conquests, it is important to remember that the élite of the new Islamic state was bound together by common values and expectations. According to the traditional Islamic sources, at least, the early Islamic ruling élite, whose members all hailed from the main towns of western Arabia – Mecca, Medina, and al-Ṭā'if – was a small group of men, almost all personally well-known to one another. All had embraced Islam and had shared certain formative experiences (notably, helping the prophet Muḥammad create the nascent Islamic state in Medina, and spreading its hegemony during the Prophet's last years and during the wars of the *ridḍa*). They were not all from the same tribe (though many were blood relatives or became linked by marriage), so we are not dealing mainly with a long-distance network of kinship ties; but all were, to a significant degree, shaped by their similar origins, common history, and common commitments. This is not to say that they all had exactly the same objectives as individuals, but at least the commanders in the field would have known what measures and behaviour would be acceptable to the Caliphs in

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Medina. The implication of this is that the Caliphs might well have been able to content themselves with giving their commanders only general policy guidelines and objectives, secure in the knowledge that they would implement them on their respective fronts in a manner acceptable to the whole ruling group collectively. The existence of this kind of group cohesion and homogeneity both increased the reality of general strategic coordination, and reduced the need for close surveillance of subordinates by the Caliphs (and for the administrative instruments needed to carry out such surveillance).<sup>49</sup>

**IV. Conclusions**

While we must acknowledge that the Islamic historiographical tradition has presented the conquest era in an overly centralized manner in some areas, such as taxation, I believe that the traditional view that the conquests displayed both conceptual and strategic-operational centralization or unity retains an explanatory power superior to revisionist alternatives – particularly what I have termed the accidental thesis. The accidental thesis – according to which the Arabs “found” themselves in possession of vast domains that, as an afterthought, they stitched together into an empire – leave too many important questions unanswered. How and why did they get there? Why was the military opposition of the established empires so ineffectual? How did the invaders manage to penetrate not only the Iraqi and Syrian fringes of the Arabian desert, but also deep into Iran, Egypt, and even across the sea? Why was the Hijāz, of all places, chosen as the ideological centre for these people who, according to the revisionists, had no particular conceptual focus and who, when they first emerge indisputably into the light of historical documentation, are ruling from Syria? Why, if the empire was later pieced together from smaller pieces originally conquered by different, unrelated groups, is there little or no record of the fighting among these different groups that must have attended the unification?<sup>50</sup> If we assume, with some proponents of the

<sup>49</sup> This point is made for the Roman republic by Arthur M. Eckstein, *Senate and General. Individual Decision Making and Roman Foreign Relations, 264-194 B.C.* (Berkeley, 1987), 322-324. The main thrust of Eckstein's book, however, is that the actions of Roman generals played a significant – but not unlimited – rôle in shaping Roman policy, tempering the theory advanced by others (esp. Mommsen) that during the Republic the Senate tightly controlled foreign policy.

<sup>50</sup> Consider by way of comparison, for example, the history of the same region under the successors of Alexander, who though bound to one another by the shared experience of long

accidental thesis, that the conquests were “really” at the outset a hodge-podge of local, uncoordinated raids by a variety of warlike “Arab tribesmen” with no connection to one another, how do we explain the fact that when the dust settles most governors, commanders, and rulers hailed from the Ḥijāzī towns of Mecca, Medina and al-Ṭā’if, which were not among the Arabian groups most renowned for their martial valour? These are the kinds of questions that the revisionist interpretations do not address, much less answer, but for which the traditional interpretation, even when subjected to much-needed modifications, offers perfectly plausible explanations.

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campaigning, service with the conquering hero, and powerful cultural chauvinism, immediately began fighting one another upon Alexander’s death and spent the next few centuries fighting each other. Yet the proponents of the accidental thesis ask us to believe that most of the Arab chieftains who had somehow established themselves in the Near East in the early seventh century quietly put aside their own ambitions and rallied round the Umayyads.

## THE CONQUEST OF KHŪZISTĀN: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REASSESSMENT

*Chase F. Robinson*

In 1889 Ignazio Guidi edited an East Syrian chronicle that covers the late Sasanian and very early Islamic period.<sup>1</sup> Four years later Theodor Nöldeke translated the text into German, dated it to the late seventh century, and argued that its provenance was southern, rather than northern Iraq.<sup>2</sup> Nöldeke's arguments were accepted, and the text came to be called the *Khūzistān Chronicle*, which now seems to be the preferred designation in the secondary literature.<sup>3</sup> Little more was said about the text until 1982,<sup>4</sup> when Pierre Nautin argued more vigorously for an idea floating around since Nöldeke's day, viz. that the text consisted of two unequal parts, the second of which was made up of what Nöldeke called 'notes' (*Aufzeichnungen*).<sup>5</sup> More specifically, Nautin proposed that at least two hands fashioned the work: first a chronicler, who he suggested was Elias of Merv (fl. 7th century),<sup>6</sup> and second, at least one (and perhaps more) redactor/copyist(s), who added a grab-bag collection of material onto the chronicle, which had already lost its beginning; this collection Nautin called an 'appendix'.<sup>7</sup> Now whether Elias is to be credited with the first,

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<sup>1</sup> 'Un nuovo testo siriano sulla storia degli ultimi Sassanidi', *Attes du huitième Congrès international des Orientalistes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1891), Semitics Section, Part B, 1–36. All citations here are to Guidi's post-Nöldeke edition, *Chronicon anonymum*, in *Chronica Minora* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1903; *CSCO* 1–2, *Scr. syri* 1–2), I, 15–39 (Syriac text); II, 15–32 (Latin trans.).

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, 'Die von Guidi herausgegebene syrische Chronik übersetzt und commentiert', *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-Hist. Classe, 128 (1893), 1–48.

<sup>3</sup> It is also occasionally referred to as the 'Anonymous Nestorian Chronicle'; see Sebastian P. Brock, 'Syriac historical writing: a survey of the main sources', *Journal of the Iraqi Academy* (Syriac Corporation) 5 (1979–80), 25/302; *idem*, 'Syriac sources for seventh-century history', *BMGS* 2 (1976), 23–4; Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), index of sources, s.v. 'Khūzistān Chronicle'; Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia syriaca* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1965), 206–07; J.-B. Chabot, *Littérature syriaque* (Paris: Librairie Bloud et Gay, 1934), 103; Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers, 1922), 207; Michael Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 563. The Haddad edition (noted by Brock, 'Syriac historical writing', 25/302) is unavailable to me, but none of the Ms. variants listed by Brock elsewhere ('Notes on some texts in the Mingana Collection', *JSS* 14 [1969], 221) improves on Guidi's (and Nöldeke's) readings.

<sup>4</sup> With perhaps one exception: Fiey's tentative suggestion that either Daniel bar Mariam or Mikhā of Bēt Garmē was 'la source ecclésiastique'. See Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Īṣō' yaw le Grand: vie du catholicos nestorien Īṣō' yaw III d'Adiabēne (580–659)', *OCP* 36 (1970), 46 n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 2. He also speaks of 'der wenigstens zwei Generationen später schreibende Redactor' (*ibid.*, 20 n. 3).

<sup>6</sup> On Elias, see Baumstark, *Literatur*, 208; Chabot, *Littérature*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Nautin, 'L'auteur de la "Chronique Anonyme de Guidi": Élie de Merv', *RHR* 199 (1982), 303–14.

chronicle, section of the work is not at all clear, but Nautin was certainly correct to emphasize the contrast between this part and what follows; if anything pulls the heterogeneous material together here, it is no longer chronology, but rather an enthusiasm for geography.<sup>8</sup>

For the date of the composition of the chronicle, Nautin argued for a *terminus ante quem* of 657 or 658, the date of ʾIshō'yab III's death;<sup>9</sup> he did not date the 'appendix', but much of the evidence cited by Nöldeke to date what he called a 'letzten Verfassers' would now apply, apparent allusions to the conquest of Africa and the failed siege of Constantinople taking us to c. 680.<sup>10</sup> Nöldeke's argument naturally turns on his understanding of these allusions, and in fact there are grounds for arguing that Nautin's 'appendix' was compiled even earlier, perhaps very soon after the completion of the chronicle. For there are no unambiguous references to events in the 660s and 670s: thus, what Nöldeke took to be an allusion to the famous siege of Constantinople of the late 670s ('Over Constantinople He has not yet given them control') may rather allude to obscure events in the 650s.<sup>11</sup> But for our purposes it matters little if Nautin's 'appendix' had been compiled by 660, 670, or 680, and I shall stick with Nöldeke's more conservative dating.<sup>12</sup> The material may have been compiled earlier; there is no reason to think that it was compiled later.

In terms of form and provenance, the 'appendix' is composed of a series of discrete accounts, already written in character,<sup>13</sup> and perhaps even more clearly than the chronicle, it reflects local knowledge. It is true that similarities to material that appears in Monophysite sources suggest that at least some of our text's information about Syria came from a Syrian-Byzantine milieu;<sup>14</sup> but there is precious little of this, and what does come from the West is vague in the extreme: there is no doubt that Syria and Egypt were distant places. Here it is particularly important to note that unlike much of the later Christian tradition that betrays the influence of recognizably Islamic historiographical concerns,<sup>15</sup> the 'appendix'—here like the chronicle—shows no reliance on the Islamic historical tradition. Entirely absent are features such as Arabic loan words (e.g. *rasūlā*, *fetnā*),<sup>16</sup> *hijrī* dating,<sup>17</sup> and interests that reflect a specifically Islamic *Sitz im Leben* (e.g. Arabian genealogy).<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the names of

<sup>8</sup> It includes, *inter alia*, an account of one of Elias' miracles, the foundation of several cities (see Nautin, 'L'auteur', 307–08), the conquest reports discussed here, Heraclius' death, and some Arabian topography.

<sup>9</sup> Nautin, 'L'auteur', 311; Fiey (ʾIshō'yaw le Grand') puts his death in the year 659.

<sup>10</sup> 'Chronik', 2–3.

<sup>11</sup> As argued by Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a study of the use of non-Muslim sources for early Islamic history* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1996), 185 n. 41.

<sup>12</sup> The text's silence may suggest a date earlier than Nöldeke's; it may also reflect the compiler's project, since he makes no attempt to be thorough or comprehensive, and is apparently concerned to cobble together the stray piece of information that appeals to his interest in geography.

<sup>13</sup> See Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 2.

<sup>14</sup> See below, n. 205.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Lawrence I. Conrad, 'Theophanes and the Arabic historical tradition: some indications of intercultural transmission', *BF* 15 (1990), 1–44.

<sup>16</sup> See the examples adduced in Andrew Palmer, *The seventh century in the West-Syrian chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 49 n. 162, 56 n. 173 (*rasūl*); and see also the *Zuqnin Chronicle*, IV, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot under the erroneous title of *Chronique de Denys de Tell Mahré, quatrième partie* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1895), AG 967 (*fetnā*).

<sup>17</sup> Such as that in the (West Syrian) *Chronicle of 1234*; see Jean Maurice Fiey's introduction to the French translation of the second volume, *Anonymi auctoris chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, II (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1974; CSCO 354, Scr. syri 154), x; also in the East Syrian *Opus chronologicum* by Elijah of Nisibis (wr. 410/1019), ed. E. W. Brooks (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1910), 134, where Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (whose name is given in full) is said to have conquered Bēt Hūzayē in AH 22.

<sup>18</sup> Such as we have in Theophanes (d. 818); noted by Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 144. The matter is discussed fully in Conrad, 'Theophanes', 11–16.

Abū Mūsā [al-Ash'arī], Khālīd [ibn al-Walīd], and Sa'd ibn [Abī] Waqqās appear in fragmentary form, the Persian general Hormīzdān is called 'the Mede', and such details as do exist—particularly the names and offices of local church notables—are as hard to reconcile with Islamic historiographical concerns as they are natural in a local Nestorian Christian milieu.

It is in the midst of the broadly heterogeneous material in the 'appendix' that the reader comes across the subject of this article: a vivid and detailed account of the conquest of Bēt Hūzāyē (Ar. Khūzistān/al-Ahwāz). Although the *Khūzistān Chronicle* has been read several times with an eye towards discerning a Christian reaction to early Islam in general,<sup>19</sup> it has not yet been brought to bear systematically on any of the vexing historical and historiographical problems that plague students of the conquests. Of course, Nöldeke did address some of these problems in his translation, but his *marginalia* are spotty and now show their age;<sup>20</sup> in any case, he apparently sought only to elucidate the recently available Syriac text. The source has also been put to use in a summary of the campaigns of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd,<sup>21</sup> but there its significance lay in its silence about Khālīd's presence in Iraq, rather than in what it *does* say about the Muslim presence in Khūzistān. As far as the conquest is concerned, Islamicists from Wellhausen to Caetani to Donner have relied instead on the Arabic sources, and these being generally so intractable, and Islamicists generally so conservative, scholarship has hardly moved at all.<sup>22</sup> In fact, inasmuch as it has moved, our knowledge has contracted; and it is impossible to find fault with Donner's sensible view that we now must be content with 'a sequence of events and with the general understanding that the conquest of southern Iraq took place between AD 635 and 642. To seek greater chronological precision is to demand more of the sources than they can reasonably be expected to provide'.<sup>23</sup>

To break the logjam we must leave the Islamic tradition. In what follows I shall do so, putting the long-neglected Syriac text to work by translating and commenting on its description of how several cities in Khūzistān fell to the Arabs.<sup>24</sup> My interests are primarily historiographical, and thoroughly conventional at that: I am concerned with the old-fashioned—if still unresolved—question of how faithfully our Islamic sources record conquest history. Of course it is impossible to know if the events described by our anonymous Syriac author actually took place as he describes them. We cannot pretend that literary representation, particularly of this variety, is a disinterested witness to events past,<sup>25</sup> and early sources are not necessarily more accurate than later

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Claude Cahen, 'Note sur l'accueil des chrétiens d'Orient à l'Islam', *RHR* 166 (1964), 51–3; Harold Suermann, 'Orientalische Christen und der Islam: christliche Texte aus der Zeit von 632–750', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 67 (1983), 130–31; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it*, 182–9. The work is curiously absent from M. Benedicte Landron, 'Les relations originelles entre chrétiens de l'Est (nestoriens) et musulmans', *PDQ* 10 (1981–82), 191–222.

<sup>20</sup> For example, the material on the conquest of Khūzistān attributed to Sayf ibn 'Umar (d. 180/796), and preserved in al-Tabarī (wr. 303/915), was not yet available to Nöldeke.

<sup>21</sup> See Patricia Crone, art. 'Khālīd b. al-Walīd' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 961a.

<sup>22</sup> Julius Wellhausen, 'Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams', in his *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, VI (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1899), 95–6; Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1905–26), III, 906–16; IV, 3, 454–74; Donner, *Conquests*, 212–17.

<sup>23</sup> Donner, *Conquests*, 217.

<sup>24</sup> The 'appendix' also has something to say about matters in Syria and Egypt, which I have translated in a brief appendix of my own; it follows below.

<sup>25</sup> The point hardly needs demonstration, but cf. John Wansbrough, *The sectarian milieu: content and composition of Islamic salvation history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 119: '...it ought to be clear that there can be no question of a neutral or "objective" source. Each witness, regardless of its confessional alignment, exhibits a similar, if not altogether identical, concern to understand the theodicy'.



ones.<sup>26</sup> But if we shall never know exactly what happened in Khūzistān in the 640s and 650s, our Syriac source preserves a very early understanding of what happened, and in so doing it provides an invaluable control for the later Islamic tradition. Early, naive, and historiographically independent of Islamic sources, it allows us to identify and occasionally disentangle strands of tradition that are manifestly late and polemically conditioned from other, older, strands that preserve authentically early views of conquest history.

### *The Syriac account*

The relevant account may be translated as follows.<sup>27</sup> I have broken the text into paragraphs for the sake of clarity.

At the time of which we have been speaking (*beh dēn b-hanā zabnā d-men l'el emarnan*), when the Arabs (*tayyāyē*) conquered all the lands of the Persians and Byzantines,<sup>28</sup> they also entered and conquered all the fortified towns, that is, Bēt Lapāt (Ar. Jundaysābūr),<sup>29</sup> Karka d-Ledān,<sup>30</sup> and Shūshan, the citadel.<sup>31</sup> There remained only Shūsh (Ar. al-Sūs) and Shūshtrā (Ar. Tustar), which were very strong, while of all the Persians none remained to resist the Arabs except king Yazdgard<sup>32</sup> and one of his commanders (*had men rabbay haylawāteh*), whose name was Hormīz dān the Mede,<sup>33</sup> who gathered troops and held Shūsh and Shūshtrā. This Shūshtrā is very extensive and strong, because of the mighty rivers and canals that surround it on every side like moats. One of these was called Ardashīragān, after Ardashīr who dug it; another, which crossed it, was called Shamīrām, after the queen; and another, Dārāyagān, after Darius. The largest of all of them was a mighty torrent, which flowed down from the northern mountains.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> It is regrettable that this point is usually made apologetically, in defence of late evidence; see K. Lawson Younger, *Ancient conquest accounts: a study in ancient Near Eastern and biblical history writing* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 249–53.

<sup>27</sup> The passage begins on 35:20/29:30 and ends at 37:14/31:2.

<sup>28</sup> As Nöldeke remarked ('Chronik', 41 n. 4) this passage seems to allude to an earlier one, which begins on 30:23/26:13: 'Then God brought the sons of Ismail against them, [innumerable] like sand on the sea shore. Muḥammad was their leader (*mdabbbrānā*). Neither walls, gates, armor, or shields withstood them, and they took control over all of the land of the Persians. Yazdgard sent countless armies against them, but the Arabs (*tayyāyē*) defeated them all; they even killed Rustam. Yazdgard shut himself up inside the walls of Maḥōzē (i.e. Seleucia-Ctesiphon), but eventually escaped by fleeing. He came to the lands of the Hūzāyē and of the Marōnayē. There he ended his life. The Arabs took control of Maḥōzē and all of its lands. They also came to the Byzantine lands, and they plundered and ravaged all of the lands of Syria. Heraclius, the king of the Byzantines, sent armies against them, but the Arabs killed more than 100,000 of them'.

<sup>29</sup> On Bēt Lapāt, see Jean Maurice Fiey, 'L'Élam, la première des métropoles ecclésiastiques syriennes orientales', *Melito* 5 (1969), 227–67; reprinted in *idem*, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552* (London: Variorum, 1979), Chapter III.

<sup>30</sup> On Karka d-Ledān, see Fiey, 'L'Élam, la première des métropoles ecclésiastiques syriennes orientales (suite)', *PdO* 1 (1970), 123–30; reprinted in his *Communautés*, Chapter IIIb.

<sup>31</sup> As Nöldeke comments ('Chronik', 42 n. 2), the phrase is biblical, but the author clearly does not have in mind Shūsh (Susa, al-Sūs), which presently follows.

<sup>32</sup> i.e. Yazdgard III (r. 632–51).

<sup>33</sup> On the name, see Ferdinand Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1895), 10. The Arabic form preferred is generally al-Hurmuzān, with the important exception of Ibn A'tham (wr. 204/819–20), whose reading (H-r-m-z-d-ā-n) comes closest to the Syriac. On the date and transmission history of Ibn A'tham's history, several recensions of which have survived—at least in part—to modern times, see Lawrence I. Conrad, *Ibn A'tham and his history* (Winona Lake, IN: American Oriental Society, forthcoming).

<sup>34</sup> For a convenient discussion of the region's geography, see W. Barthold, *An historical geography of Iran*, trans. Svat Soucek, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Chapter 11.

Then (*haydēn*) an Arab commander known as<sup>35</sup> Abū Mūsā attacked Hormīzdān the Mede. He (Abū Mūsā) had built al-Baṣra as a settlement (*l-mawtābhōn*) for the Arabs, where the Tigris flows into the great ocean, between the cultivated land and the desert, just as Sa'd bar Waqqāṣ had built the city of 'Aqūlā as another settlement for the Arabs, which was named Kūfa, after the bend of the Euphrates. But when Abū Mūsā went to attack Hormīzdān, this Hormīzdān devised stratagems in order to prevent them (the Arabs) from engaging him, until he gathered an army. He wrote to Abū Mūsā that he (Abū Mūsā) should stop taking captives and making war, and that he (Hormīzdān) would send him whatever tribute (*madattā*) they imposed on him. Thus it remained for two years.

Trusting his walls, Hormīzdān then broke the truce (*shaynā*) between them, and killed the men who had been ambassadors between them, one of whom was George, the bishop of Ulay.<sup>36</sup> He [also] imprisoned Abraham, the metropolitan of Furāt.<sup>37</sup> He [then] sent many armies against the Arabs, but they defeated them all. The Arabs rushed [forward], lay siege to Shūsh, took it after a few days, and killed all of the nobles (*prīshē*) in it. They seized the house that is called the 'House of Mār Daniel', and took the treasure there enclosed, which had been kept there on the kings' orders since the days of Darius and Cyrus. They also broke open and made off with a silver coffin, in which a mummified corpse was laid; many said it was Daniel's, but others [claimed] that it was Darius.

They also lay siege to Shūshtrā, and fought for two years to take it. Then a man from Qaṭar<sup>38</sup> who was living there befriended a man who had a house on the walls, and the two of them conspired together. They went out to the Arabs and told them: 'If you give us a third of the spoil of the city, we will let you into it'. They came to an agreement, dug tunnels under the walls, and let in the Arabs, who [thus] captured Shūshtrā. They shed blood there as if it were water. They killed the exegete of the city and the bishop of Hormīzardashīr (Ar. Sūq al-Ahwāz),<sup>39</sup> along with the students,<sup>40</sup> priests, and deacons, whose blood they shed in the holy sanctuary. They took Hormīzdān alive.

The passage translated appears to be a discrete unit. With a sure command of detail, and paced by a series of adverbs and adverbial phrases that link the episodes temporally and logically, the account generates a sense of movement that is almost entirely lacking in other parts of the 'appendix'. Elsewhere information is imparted: here a coherent story is told. Since our compiler generally shows little if any historical method,<sup>41</sup> we can assume that the account came to him in this form; he copied it, just as he copied the chronicle before it. Its appeal presumably lay in the quality of its narrative, which vividly

<sup>35</sup> *Metknē*, usually merely 'nicknamed', but here it precisely expresses the Arabic *kunya*.

<sup>36</sup> Apparently located south of al-Hīra; see Morony, *Iraq*, 152; Donner, *Conquests*, 329 n. 66.

<sup>37</sup> That is, Furāt d-Maysān, which was apparently located opposite the medieval site of al-Baṣra; see Morony, *Iraq*, 159.

<sup>38</sup> Nöldeke ('Chronik', 25, n. 2) points out that this was understood broadly: 'Qaṭar umfasst aber bei diesen Syrern alle Länder der nordöstlichen Arabiens, wo damals viele nestorianische Christen wohnten'. The point, as I argue below, is Nestorian church politics.

<sup>39</sup> On Hormīzardashīr, see Fiey, 'L'Élam...(suite)', 130–34.

<sup>40</sup> *Eskūlāyē*; for the term, and a sense of school life, see *The statutes of the School of Nisibis*, ed. and trans. Arthur Vööbus (Stockholm: Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1962), esp. 79; J. B. Segal, *Edessa, The Blessed City* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 149–51.

<sup>41</sup> It is particularly worth noting that no effort has been made to relate Khālīd's march to Syria, as portrayed in the 'appendix', to the chronicler's earlier allusion to al-Yarmūk (on which see below).

describes the terrible fate of a Nestorian heartland; it may also have appealed to the copyist's (or copyists') interest in geography and topography. Whatever its ultimate provenance, it is more detailed than anything available to Elias of Merv,<sup>42</sup> or, for that matter, anything else to be written in either West or East Syriac.

*What the Syriac account cannot tell us*

In what follows I shall argue that the 'appendix' to the *Khūzistān Chronicle* can provide enough corroboration for accounts in the Islamic tradition that we must posit the continuous transmission of historical material within the latter. In this case, some early material clearly did survive the hazardous passage from witness to tradent to historian, a passage of approximately 150–200 years. The degree to which those who initially transmitted and compiled the material were concerned with what we would consider historiographical issues—particularly problems of sequence and time—is considerably harder to discern, and although we shall meet these problems throughout, it is best if we address two at the start.

First, since our source begins with the entrance of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, it sheds no light on the events that the Islamic tradition describes as having taken place before his appearance in Khūzistān: of cities that are said to have entered into treaties, which they would soon break, and of 'Utba ibn Ghazwān and al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba, the two commanders who are said to have preceded Abū Mūsā on the front, we hear nothing.<sup>43</sup> What our source does say, however, is that all but four of the 'fortified towns' had been taken *before* Abū Mūsā arrived on the scene; and thus there is probably something to the Islamic accounts that attribute some role to 'Utba and al-Mughīra.<sup>44</sup> Of course, whether Abū Mūsā's victories can be considered the last phase of a continuous series of campaigns that began with 'Utba is altogether a different question, and one that the source does not answer: the world of Medinan state building and caliphal politics is unknown to our Syriac source. Our Syriac compiler was apparently concerned only to record the outlines of the Sasanian defeat, rather than a detailed history of the Muslim victory; and even assuming that he had heard of such earlier battles as there were, we can hardly expect him to have connected them to those led by Abū Mūsā. He records what the Islamic tradition generally considers the final phase of the conquest of Khūzistān, probably for the simple reason that Abū Mūsā's campaigns were indeed decisive.

Although Syriac accounts can occasionally provide invaluable help in solving dating problems,<sup>45</sup> this one cannot; here we arrive at the second principal limitation of our source. An assortment of topics,<sup>46</sup> the 'appendix' can only yield a relative dating, and one that happens to be particularly weak to boot. The beginning of the passage suggests that the start of the conquest

<sup>42</sup> Be that in the chronicle part of the work, following Nautin, or in the Christian Arabic *Chronicle of Seert*, following L. Sako, 'Les sources de la chronique de Séert', *PdO* 14 (1987), 159. On the disputed authorship of this work, see Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Ishō'dnah et *La chronique de Seert*', *PdO* 6–7 (1975–76), 447–59; and Nautin's riposte in 'L'auteur', 313–14.

<sup>43</sup> For summaries of these events, see the works cited above, n. 22.

<sup>44</sup> Here it is tempting to infer from the presence of the bishop of Hormīzardashīr in Tustar that his city had already fallen.

<sup>45</sup> Particularly for events in Syria and Palestine, where the Christian testimony is most dense; the earliest example is Theodor Nöldeke, 'Zur Geschichte der Araber im 1. Jahrhundert d.H. aus syrischen Quellen', *ZDMG* 29 (1875), 76–98.

<sup>46</sup> In Nautin's words ('L'auteur', 304), 'un appendice fait de morceaux décousus'.

of Khūzistān was roughly contemporaneous with, or perhaps even followed, that of Iraq and Syria: 'At the time of which we have been speaking, when the Arabs conquered all the lands of the Persians and Byzantines, they also entered and conquered all the fortified towns...'. But after recording Abū Mūsā's campaigns, it then turns to Khālid ibn al-Walīd's conquest of Syria, which it says *followed* those of Abū Mūsā: 'Afterwards (*bātarkēn*) a man from the Arabs named Kāled came and went to the West, and took the lands and towns as far as 'Arab'.<sup>47</sup> Now the problem can be solved by preferring the second of these two passages, which has the virtue of more clearly asserting a sequence of events; and since the remarks that follow seem to allude to the battle of al-Yarmūk,<sup>48</sup> we can actually generate a *terminus ante quem* of late August of 636/Rajab of AH 15 for the end of Abū Mūsā's campaigns.<sup>49</sup> That this dating is at severe variance with the consensus of the Islamic sources might cause some concern,<sup>50</sup> particularly because it would force a redating of the founding of al-Baṣra; but it is far from fatal, the Islamic tradition containing some aberrant dating schemes of its own. A report in the *Kitāb al-kharāj* of Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), for example, can be handled in such a way so as to produce the dating of c. AH 15 or 16 for the fall of Tustar.<sup>51</sup>

But there are too many problems to overcome. For one thing the sequence of conquests would run afoul of another, earlier, non-Islamic source.<sup>52</sup> For another, it is not at all clear that the author of the passages translated above can also be credited with the passage translated below; and since the final redactor/editor manifests so little interest in chronology, we cannot use the latter to date material in the former without establishing single authorship. Moreover, even if we could establish a single author, his acquaintance with events in Syria pales in comparison with his knowledge of his (apparently) native Bēt Hūzāyē; and it would be nothing if not reckless to use his vague and secondhand material concerning the West to date his detailed account of local events. Finally, it may be that the crucial adverb (*bātarkēn*)—the hinge upon which the proposed dating would swing—has little temporal significance, and instead marks nothing more than a narrative transition.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> For the whole passage, see the Appendix below.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Nöldeke, 'Geschichte', 79; Palmer, *Seventh century*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> According to the conventional interpretations of M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoires sur la conquête de la Syrie*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1900), 108–24; Donner, *Conquests*, 128–44; Palmer, *Seventh century*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> The earliest date for operations in Khūzistān seems to be the consensus report (*qālū*, 'they said') that begins al-Balādhuri's section on al-Ahwāz; but here it is al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba who raids Sūq al-Ahwāz in late 15 or early 16/636 or 637; see al-Balādhuri (d. 279/892), *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1866), 376. Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854), *Ta'rikh*, ed. Suhayl Zakkar (Damascus: Wizārat al-thaqāfa wa-l-siyāha wa-l-irshād al-qawmī, 1967), I, 105, puts this raid in AH 16. The latest date is in the severely telescoped account in al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897), *Historiae*, ed. M. T. Houtsma (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1883), II, 180, where Abū Mūsā's conquest of al-Ahwāz and Iṣṭakhr is put in AH 23.

<sup>51</sup> The report states that Abū Mūsā conquered Tustar, Iṣfahān, Mihrajānqadhaq, and Nihāwand (?) while Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās was laying siege to al-Madā'in; see Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-kharāj* (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-salafiya, AH 1352), 60. The date for the final capitulation of al-Madā'in is usually given as 16/637; see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879–1901), I, 2431–32. But its siege may have been very protracted; al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/891), *Al-Akhhār al-tiwāl*, ed. Vladimir Guirgass and Ignatius Kratchkovsky (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1888–1912), 133, puts it at 28 months. See also al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, 262–64; Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1866–73), I, 768, which draws on al-Balādhuri, as well as on a chronology that dates the conquest to AH 15.

<sup>52</sup> See ps.-Sebeōs (wr. c. 660–70), *Histoire d'Héraclius*, trans. Frédéric Macler (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1904), 97–101.

<sup>53</sup> For parallels in the Arab-Islamic tradition, see Albrecht Noth, *The early Arabic historical tradition: a source-critical study*, 2nd ed. in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994; hereafter cited as Noth/Conrad), 173–77.

In sum, nothing in the 'appendix' can yield a precise date for the conquest of the south. Of course this can also be restated in more positive terms: nothing in the 'appendix' can throw serious doubt on a reconstruction that is based on a reading of the Islamic tradition, and that dates the fall of Khūzistān after that of al-Madā'in, perhaps in AH 22 or 23.<sup>54</sup>

*What the Syriac account can tell us*

If the text cannot answer all of our questions, it can shed a direct and bright light on several others. It is to these questions that I shall now turn.

The conquest of Jundaysābūr

The first problem concerns the fall of Jundaysābūr. The sources familiar to al-Ṭabarī (wr. 303/915) and al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) held that the definitive conquest of Jundaysābūr followed that of Tustar and al-Sūs; this is the sequence that Donner describes.<sup>55</sup> But there were differing views: a tradition preserved by Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt (d. 240/854), for example, holds that Jundaysābūr fell before Tustar,<sup>56</sup> and this is clearly what our Syriac authority has in mind as well. Considering that the conquest of Jundaysābūr does not seem to have been a principal concern for most of our Muslim authorities, and considering too that our Syriac source is not only local, but also that Jundaysābūr was the metropolitan centre of Nestorian Bēt Hūzāyē,<sup>57</sup> one might side with Khalīfa. In this case, as in others, consensus is apparently no guarantee of accuracy. Meanwhile, what the Syriac source has to say about the canal-dominated topography of Tustar is very much in line with how the city is described in many conquest accounts in the Islamic tradition.<sup>58</sup>

The point to be emphasized here is a broader agreement between the Islamic tradition and our Syriac source: al-Sūs and Tustar were among the last cities to hold out in Khūzistān, falling definitively only after Abū Mūsā appeared on the scene, and al-Hurmuzān, sent by Yazdagird, played a crucial role in the Sasanian defence.

Al-Baṣra, al-Kūfa, and the problem of conquest participation

Our Syriac testimony on the founding of al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa is one of the earliest datable accounts we possess. It is both familiar (the two are established as 'settlements' for the Arabs) and unfamiliar (Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, rather than 'Utba ibn Ghazwān, being given credit for founding al-Baṣra).<sup>59</sup> Another,

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Donner, *Conquests*, 217.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2567; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 382; Donner, *Conquests*, 216.

<sup>56</sup> Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 138.

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Fiey, 'L'Élam', 227–67.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, al-Qummi (d. 805/1402), *Tārikh-i Qumm*, ed. Jalīl al-Dīn Tihirānī (Tehran: Maṭba'at-i Majlis, 1934), 297—this work is a Persian translation of an otherwise lost late tenth-century Arabic original; see A. K. S. Lambton, 'An account of the *Tārikh-i Qumm*', *BSOAS* 12 (1947–48), 586–96. Al-Qummi credits his material to Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/761) and Abū 'Ubayda (d. 211/826), citing for the latter a *Futūh ahl al-Islām*, which seems otherwise unknown; the material may be familiar to Ibn al-Nadīm (wr. 377/987) under the title *Futūh al-Ahwāz*. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1871–72), 54; Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1968–72), V, 239. Whether this was an independent monograph, or rather a section in a larger work, is at present hard to say—Michael Lecker thinks the former; see his 'Biographical notes on Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthanna', *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995), 76.

<sup>59</sup> On al-Baṣra, see Charles Pellat, art. 'al-Baṣra' in *ET<sup>2</sup>*, I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 1085a (which puts the conquest in AH 17); Sāliḥ Ahmad al-'Alī, *Al-Tanẓīmāt al-ijtimā'iyya wa-l-iqtisādīyya fī l-Baṣra fī l-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-ma'ārif, 1953), 25–6 (perhaps as early as AH 14 or 16).

and admittedly much later, Christian source also credits Abū Mūsā with al-Baṣra,<sup>60</sup> but the evidence is more enticing than clinching.

As far as the conquest is concerned, the Islamic tradition generally has Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī play a dual role. First, he is said to effect the definitive conquest of cities, such as Sūq al-Ahwāz, that had reneged on earlier treaties; and second, he is given a prominent role in the two victories of al-Sūs and Tustar, which broke the back of the Sasanian defence. As we have already seen, on the first of these our Syriac source can offer only silence, which is particularly frustrating since so many cities are said to have reneged on earlier agreements. In the case of Tustar we have another instance of this, but because our Syriac source *does* have something to say here, our conclusions perhaps have more force there.<sup>61</sup> On the second problem—Abū Mūsā's role in the Muslim armies—our Syriac source can suggest that credit for the conquest of al-Sūs and Tustar indeed does belong to Abū Mūsā, rather than to other candidates favoured by our Muslim authorities, particularly Abū Sabra, whom Sayf ibn 'Umar (d. 180/796) gives pride of place in the army that besieged Tustar.<sup>62</sup>

It is not just the silence of our Syriac source that makes Abū Sabra's role at Tustar a problem. He is also curiously absent in the very battle scene that Sayf himself describes: it is at Abū Mūsā's feet, rather than Abū Sabra's, that the arrow shot from a traitor's bow dramatically lands, thus turning the tide of the battle.<sup>63</sup> It is true that his absence on the field could be argued away on the grounds that the conquest tradition occasionally distinguishes between a commander who has nominal authority over a campaign, and a sub-commander, sometimes called the *amīr al-qitāl*, or 'battle commander', who leads the army into combat, and who has authority to enter into agreements on his superior's behalf.<sup>64</sup> But no such distinction is made at Tustar, and other sources are as consistent in ignoring Abū Sabra as they are on insisting on the command of Abū Mūsā.<sup>65</sup>

They ignore Abū Sabra's role in Tustar for the simple reason that they ignore him otherwise: Sayf is apparently alone in having him briefly hold the governorship of al-Baṣra after 'Utba ibn Ghazwān and before al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba.<sup>66</sup> These then are the terms in which we can understand Abū Sabra's cameo appearance in Sayf's account, and the second reason why we should reject it. For it apparently comes not from an authentic memory of the events in question, but rather was generated by a view widely held by conquest authorities that the governorship of al-Baṣra and the leadership of the Khūzistān campaigns were one and the same.<sup>67</sup> In the case of Abū Mūsā,

<sup>60</sup> Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), *Ta'rikh mukhtasar al-duwal*, ed. Antoine Salhānī (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1890), 174, knows 'Utba and al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba only as military commanders; the laying out of the *khiṭat*, the building of *manāzil* and the congregational mosque, Arab settlement—all these are credited to Abū Mūsā. Al-Ya'qūbī (*Historiae*, II, 163) explicitly credits 'Utba with the *ikhtitāf* of the site.

<sup>61</sup> See below.

<sup>62</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2553–6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 2554.

<sup>64</sup> Thus Suhayl ibn 'Adī in *ibid.*, I, 2506–7.

<sup>65</sup> Thus tribesmen boast that they fought alongside Abū Mūsā; see Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), *Al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Sa'īd al-Laḥḥām (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1989), VIII, 17; on p. 32 Abū Mūsā is explicitly identified as the *amīr al-jaysh*. Al-Qummī (*Tārikh-i Qumm*, 295) puts Abū 'Ubayda's and Ibn Ishāq's reports under the rubric *dhikr-i fath-i Abū Mūsā Ash'arī*.

<sup>66</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2498, 2550–51.

<sup>67</sup> Note that al-Balādhuri's first report (*Futūḥ*, 376: *qālū*), which outlines the overall sequence of events, conspicuously and explicitly connects the conquest of al-Ahwāz with the administration of al-Baṣra: 'They reported: al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba raided Sūq al-Ahwāz during his governorship when 'Utba ibn Ghazwān was removed from al-Baṣra at the end of the year 15 or the beginning of the year 16...then Abū Mūsā raided it when 'Umar appointed him governor of al-Baṣra after al-Mughīra'.

where we have a broad Islamic consensus that is corroborated by our Syriac source, there is good reason to think that the view is correct: Abū Mūsā founded al-Baṣra and did play a starring role in the conquest of Khūzistān. In the case of Abū Sabra we have only Sayf.

Abū Sabra's obscurity may have had narrative advantages for Sayf, who has him oversee what is presented as two separate armies, one Baṣran and one Kūfan.<sup>68</sup> These armies pose problems of their own. Now because our Syriac source implies that Abū Mūsā came to Khūzistān from al-Baṣra, we can put some stock in the Islamic accounts that speak of Baṣran armies as well.<sup>69</sup> Kūfan participation in the conquest of the south is altogether harder to confirm, however. As Donner has noted,<sup>70</sup> the introduction of reinforcements into the Khūzistān campaign—of which the Kūfans under al-Nu'mān ibn al-Muqarrin or 'Ammār ibn Yāsir figure very prominently—was a matter of some controversy. In what follows I shall offer some suggestions why.

### The conquest of Khūzistān

At issue was the region's revenues, since it was by claiming conquest experience that one argued one's share; in other words, the conquest record was influenced by post-conquest politics.<sup>71</sup> Sayf preserves an account that has al-Aḥnaf ibn Qays voicing Baṣran grievances vis-à-vis the Kūfans soon after the conquest of Sūq al-Ahwāz, and to judge by 'Umar's response, his argument was convincing: in addition to doling out to the Baṣrans former Sasanian crown land, 'Umar is said to have increased the number of Baṣrans receiving 2,000 *dirhams* by including among them all those who had fought at (Sūq) al-Ahwāz.<sup>72</sup> The Baṣrans and Kūfans disputed about Tustar in particular. The categorical assertion that Tustar belongs to the Baṣrans is warning enough that administrative geography was controversial,<sup>73</sup> and echoes of the controversy can be heard even as late as Yāqūt's time, when some apparently claimed that Tustar belonged to al-Ahwāz, while others held that it belonged to al-Baṣra: Yāqūt also tells of a heated exchange between the two parties that took place before 'Umar, each claiming Tustar as their own.<sup>74</sup> Ibn A'tham al-Kufī has a much longer version of this, or a similar, scene.

The Baṣrans and Kūfans came to argue, the Baṣrans saying: 'The conquest is ours!' and the Kūfans saying: 'No, the conquest is ours!' So they argued about it to the point that something truly disagreeable almost happened between them.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2553: *wa-'alā l-farīqayn jamī'an Abū Sabra*. Cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 380: *hamila ahl al-Baṣra wa-ahl al-Kūfa*. Cf. the much later case of al-Muhallab and 'Attāb ibn Warqā', where the position of *amīr al-jamā'a* (= *amīr al-qitāl*) is determined by conquest claims by Baṣrans and Kūfans; see al-Mubarrad (d. 285/898), *Al-Kāmil fī l-luḡa wa-l-adab*, ed. William Wright (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1874–92), 675.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2552–54; Ibn A'tham, *Kitāb al-futūh*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Mu'id Khān *et al.* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmāniya, 1388–95/1968–75), II, 5; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 372–3.

<sup>70</sup> See Donner, *Conquests*, 342 n. 229.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Robert Brunschwig, 'Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam et la conquête de l'Afrique du Nord par les arabes: étude critique', *Afrique* 6 (1942–47), 110–55. Cf. the case of the Jazīra in C. F. Robinson, *Empire and elites after the Muslim conquest: the transformation of northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6ff.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2539–40; cf. I, 2672–3.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 35: *wa-Tustar min arḍ al-Baṣra*.

<sup>74</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, I, 849 (both accounts).

<sup>75</sup> Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 27. Cf. the dispute between a Kūfan and a Syrian, where the former crowns about his townsmen's victories: 'We were the victors at the battle of al-Qādisiyya and the battle of such-and-such' (*nahnu aṣḥāb yawm al-Qādisiyya wa-yawm kādihā wa-kādihā...*), and the latter about his townsmen's victories (including al-Yarmūk), in Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 17.

The solution that 'Umar is here given to provide holds that although the conquest is indeed to be credited to the Baṣrans, its benefits accrue to Baṣrans and Kūfāns alike.<sup>76</sup>

'Umar's view that conquest revenues were to be distributed to the Baṣrans and Kūfāns is more fully described by Ibn A'tham. Here Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī writes to the caliph, requesting reinforcements for the upcoming battle at Tustar; the caliph responds by dispatching a Kūfan commander. 'Ammār ibn Yāsir. As in other reports,<sup>77</sup> the operative terms (*istamadda*, *amadda*) are topological, in this case probably employed not only to emphasize the role of the caliph in conquest decision making,<sup>78</sup> but also to bring Kūfan troops into a picture that had been dominated by Baṣrans. 'Ammār ibn Yāsir is then given to describe the contents of the letter from 'Umar: 'He (the caliph) is ordering me to march to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī to come to the aid of our believing brethren from al-Baṣra' (*li-nuṣrat ikhwānīnā al-mu'minīn min ahl al-Baṣra*).<sup>79</sup> Then, after the battle, 'Umar passes judgement on the ensuing controversy:<sup>80</sup>

Tustar is [to be considered] among the conquests (*maghāzī*) of the Baṣrans even though they were aided by their brethren from among the Kūfāns (*innamā nuṣirū bi-ikhwānīhim min ahl al-Kūfa*). The same thing goes for the Kūfāns: if they make raids in their marches (*thughūr*), and the Baṣrans come to their aid, there is no harm [done to their claim] (*lam yakun bi-dhālika ba's*). For according to the book of God, victory belongs to [all] the believers; God has made [all] the believers brethren.<sup>81</sup> The conquest is the Baṣrans', but the Kūfāns are their equals in the rewards and spoils (*shurakā'uhum fī l-ajr wa-l-ghanīma*). Beware the discords inspired by Satan!<sup>82</sup>

A post-conquest opinion on the division of spoils—i.e. that merely by assisting (*nuṣra*) the Baṣrans, the Kūfāns had earned a full share—is thus detectable in a tradition that purports to describe the conquest itself. That precisely this issue was controversial is made clear elsewhere, in a work that is explicitly legal in character.<sup>83</sup> The late and polemical character of the account explains 'Umar's eirenic tone: all the rivalry that we might expect of campaigning armies, and of which we have clear echoes in the post-conquest disputes,<sup>84</sup> is stifled by a unitary and providential view of conquest history.

Post-conquest disputes influenced the historical record in other ways as well. If some attributed to 'Umar the view that the Baṣrans and Kūfāns were to share equally in the spoils, others thought differently. Thus Yāqūt preserves an echo of another view, which held that 'Umar granted the revenues of Tustar to the Baṣrans rather than to the Kūfāns, on the grounds that it was closer to al-Baṣra than it was to Kūfa.<sup>85</sup> In one of the titles attributed to al-Madā'inī

<sup>76</sup> Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2534.

<sup>78</sup> See Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 123–6. But cf. C. F. Robinson, 'The study of Islamic historiography: a progress report', *JRAS* 3, 7, 9 (1997), 218 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 10.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 27.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Sūrat al-Anfāl (8), v. 74; Sūrat al-Rūm (30), v. 47; Sūrat al-Hujurāt (49), v. 10.

<sup>82</sup> The vocabulary remains quranic: see, in particular, Sūrat al-Nisā' (4), v. 12; Sūrat Yūsuf (12), v. 100; Sūrat al-Rūm (30), v. 28.

<sup>83</sup> See al-Ṭabarī, *Ikhṭilāf al-fuqahā*, ed. Joseph Schacht (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1933), 68–71.

<sup>84</sup> One can only wonder about the contents of the *Fakhr ahl al-Kūfa 'alā l-Baṣra* by al-Wāqidi (d. 207/823), and the *Mufākharat ahl al-Baṣra wa-ahl al-Kūfa* by al-Madā'inī (d. 228/842); on which see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 100, 104. Cf. also al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1885; BGA 7), 167–73.

<sup>85</sup> Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, I, 849: *fa-ja'alāhā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb min arḍ al-Baṣra li-qurbihā minhā*.



(d. 228/842), the *Khābar al-Baṣra wa-futūḥihā wa-futūḥ mā yuqāribuhā min Dahistān wa-l-Ahwāz wa-Māsabdhān wa-ghayr dhālika*,<sup>86</sup> we may have a reconstruction of conquest history according to this principle.

Hinds has shown how Baṣran participation in the initial conquest of Fārs could be exaggerated by our sources.<sup>87</sup> Given the problems surrounding the Kūfans in Khūzistān, those determined to reconstruct history could do worse than to rethink the Kūfans' role here.

#### The question of treaties

Things are perhaps only slightly less thorny when it comes to what our Syriac source calls a 'truce' (*shaynā*). That the campaigns in Khūzistān were interrupted by a short-lived peace is clear enough; the problem is that the one promising account we have in the Islamic tradition, which is Sayf's, identifies al-Hurmuzān and 'Utba ibn Ghazwān, rather than al-Hurmuzān and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, as the parties concerned.<sup>88</sup>

In fact, Sayf knew of two such agreements. Al-Hurmuzān is first said to have reached a *ṣulḥ* agreement with 'Utba at Sūq al-Ahwāz, after he had heard of the losses of Manādhir and Nahr Tīrā to Muslim forces:

When the [Muslim] fighting force (*al-qawm*) moved against al-Hurmuzān and encamped near him in al-Ahwāz, he saw that he lacked the force to do battle. So he requested a *ṣulḥ*. They (the Muslims) then wrote to 'Utba about the matter, requesting his instructions. Al-Hurmuzān wrote to him, and 'Utba agreed to the offer on the following terms: [al-Hurmuzān would retain] all of al-Ahwāz and Mihrajānqadhaq, except Nahr Tīrā, Manādhir, and that part of Sūq al-Ahwāz that they (the Muslims) had overrun. What we have liberated will not be returned to them.

A dispute is then said to have arisen concerning the borders between al-Hurmuzān's territory and that of the Muslims; in the aftermath, al-Hurmuzān 'reneged (*kafara*), withheld what he had accepted,<sup>89</sup> enrolled Kurds (in this army), and so his army grew strong'.<sup>90</sup> He then took to the field, was defeated at Sūq al-Ahwāz, and eventually fled to Rāmhurmuz. There he reached a second *ṣulḥ*, and once again 'Umar is given to impose conditions: "Umar ordered him ('Utba) to accept [al-Hurmuzān's offer], on the following terms: that the land not conquered, i.e. Tustar, al-Sūs, Jundaysābūr, al-Bunyān, and Mihrajānqadhaq [would come under Muslim authority]'. Al-Hurmuzān agreed to the terms, which are now described in more detail:

The commanders of the Ahwāz campaign took responsibility for what was assigned to them, and al-Hurmuzān for his *ṣulḥ*, [the latter] levying taxes for them, and [the former] protecting him.<sup>91</sup> If the Kurds of Fārs raided him, they would come to his aid and defend him.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>86</sup> See Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, and London: Luzac, 1923–31), V, 315; Ursula Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf. Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der unaiyadischen Zeit* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 44.

<sup>87</sup> Martin Hinds, 'The first Arab conquests of Fārs', *Iran* 22 (1984), 39–53; reprinted in his *Studies in early Islamic history*, ed. Jere Bacharach, Lawrence I. Conrad and Patricia Crone (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1996), 197–229.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2538–42.

<sup>89</sup> i.e. what he had agreed to yield in tribute? The Arabic text is *wa-mana'a mā qabilahu*.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2540.

<sup>91</sup> *yanna'ūnahū*; one might also read *yu'awinuhūn*, 'and he (al-Hurmuzān) offering aid to them'.

<sup>92</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2543.

This *sulh* fared no better than the first: after two Muslim forces were sent into al-Ahwāz, one of which was led by Abū Mūsā, al-Hurmuzān engaged al-Nu'mān ibn al-Muqarrin, was defeated, and fled to Tustar.<sup>93</sup>

Once again, one can be cheered by the common ground: al-Hurmuzān seems to have entered into some kind of agreement with the Muslims, which perhaps stipulated an exchange of tribute for recognition of local authority, and during which al-Hurmuzān reinforced his armies. Although its exact timing escapes us, it must have been reached during, or soon after, the fall of al-Ahwāz. But it is difficult to say much more. The close similarities between Sayf's two agreements might be taken to suggest either that the 'appendix' conflated the two, or that Sayf (or his sources) had so heavily elaborated a single truce account that out of its precipitate emerged two separate accounts. A tentative argument might be made in favour of Sayf's second treaty. For whereas the first says nothing explicit about tribute, the second clearly stipulates that al-Hurmuzān collect taxes for the Muslims. Moreover, it is only at this point that Abū Mūsā enters the scene, and it is here too that Tustar emerges as a stronghold for al-Hurmuzān: to Tustar he withdraws after his defeat, and to Tustar comes help from the people of Fārs. Finally, a later passage that mentions 'the rebellion (*intiqād*) of al-Hurmuzān' clearly alludes to the breaking of the second treaty.<sup>94</sup>

#### Al-Sūs: leadership, Asāwira, and Daniel

Since our Syriac source places Hormizdān at both Shūsh and Shūshtrā, and describes his capture in the latter, we are to infer that it fell after Shūsh. Donner argues the opposite, putting al-Sūs after Tustar.<sup>95</sup> On this sequence no authority is cited, but it is implicit in Sayf in al-Ṭabarī,<sup>96</sup> and explicit in al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/891).<sup>97</sup> There appears to have been some disagreement on the matter, however. Al-Ṭabarī freely volunteers that there was no consensus about the conquest of al-Sūs,<sup>98</sup> al-Balādhurī discusses Tustar after al-Sūs,<sup>99</sup> and Ibn al-A'tham, as well as Abū 'Ubayda (d. 211/826) and Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/761, as preserved by al-Qummī, d. 805/1402), clearly put the fall of al-Sūs before that of Tustar.<sup>100</sup> This was Caetani's view,<sup>101</sup> and it is vindicated by our Syriac source.

In the precise course of the conquest of al-Sūs the Islamic sources evince little interest. A failed ruse attempted by al-Sūs's (anonymous) *marzbān* is featured in one of al-Balādhurī's accounts, according to which an *amān* was granted, and where there is no suggestion that the city was penetrated; the point is that Abū Mūsā saw through the *marzbān*'s trick, executing him and 80 fighters (*muqātila*) as a result.<sup>102</sup> A version of the same story is then related by a participant in the battle; here we read of an anonymous *dihqān*.<sup>103</sup> Ibn

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, I, 2552–3.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, I, 2614.

<sup>95</sup> Donner, *Conquests*, 216.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 2551–6.

<sup>97</sup> Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 140.

<sup>98</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 2561: *ikhtalafa ahl al-siyar fī amrihā*. Sayf's account of the conquest of Tustar (*ibid.*, I, 2542–5) may be out of place.

<sup>99</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 378–81.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn al-A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 9: *thumma sāra Abū Mūsā ilā Tustar ba'd farāghihī min amr al-Sūs*; al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qumm*, 295 (al-Sūs follows Manādhīr).

<sup>101</sup> Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, IV, 454.

<sup>102</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 378.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 378–9; see also Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 32; al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qumm*, 295.

A'tham has a version of the same story, but now both the *marzbān* (Sābūr ibn Ādharmāhān) and a lieutenant are given names.<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile, Sayf seems to be at pains to demonstrate the clemency of the victorious Muslims: the city is stormed after a siege, the conquered pathetically beg for mercy, and a *ṣulḥ* is granted by the Muslims, who are apparently led by Abū Sabra, although Abū Mūsā is also present. Behind the tradition—and perhaps the trickery account as well—there are signs of some disagreement: the granting of a *ṣulḥ* after the Muslims' violent entrance (*ba'd mā dakhālūhā 'anwatan*), and the division of spoils that is said to have taken place before the *ṣulḥ* (*wa'qtasamū mā aṣābū qabla l-ṣulḥ*) suggest that this is a reconciling account,<sup>105</sup> intended to accommodate conflicting *ṣulḥ* and *'anwa* traditions.<sup>106</sup> The failed ruse may perform a similar function for Ibn A'tham: spoils were taken after an *amān* because of the trickery.<sup>107</sup> Certainly our Syriac account, which details the killing of Christians in the city, does not inspire much confidence in reports such as these. In none of these Islamic accounts does al-Hurmuzān appear.

In Sayf's report al-Hurmuzān is again absent in the Sasanian defence, but we may have an echo of his presence: al-Shahriyār, said to be al-Hurmuzān's brother, *leads* the Muslims in battle. It is here that we get a glimpse at what really concerned the authorities: the fate of the *asāwira*, the elite cavalry of the Sasanian army. The *asāwira*, like so much in early Islamic history, are only now beginning to receive their due, and although the conquest accounts have generally been enough to persuade historians that they converted in this period,<sup>108</sup> there is some evidence to suggest that their conversion is a product of the Umayyad period.<sup>109</sup> For early Muslim traditionists it was probably not so much their conversion that was at issue as the top stipends that they were awarded; that al-Balādhurī devoted an entire section to *amr al-asāwira wa-l-zuṭṭ* at least suggests that the issue retained some interest as late as his day.<sup>110</sup> On the one hand, there was a view that the *asāwira* remained loyal to the Sasanians through Tustar. Thus Ibn A'tham, whose sequence follows that of our Syriac source, has no problem in putting not only *marāziba*, but also *asāwira* in al-Hurmuzān's forces that resisted the Muslims at Tustar;<sup>111</sup> Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/844) also preserves a reconstruction of events that has al-Hurmuzān commanding a group of *asāwira* at Tustar.<sup>112</sup> On the other hand, al-Madā'inī seems to reflect a widely held view that Siyāh al-Uswārī was sent by Yazdagird to defend al-Sūs, while al-Hurmuzān was sent to Tustar; and when, according to al-Balādhurī's sources, Siyāh learned of the capitulation of al-Sūs, or, according to al-Madā'inī, came to realize more generally that the Muslims

<sup>104</sup> Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 6–7.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. the case of Sūq al-Ahwāz, about which Khalifa ibn Khayyāṭ (*Ta'rikh*, I, 106) reports that it was conquered *sulḥan aw 'anwatan*.

<sup>106</sup> Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2565. Cf. Albrecht Noth, 'Zum Verhältnis von Kalifer Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in umayyadischer Zeit. Die 'Sulḥ-'Anwa' Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq', *WI* 14 (1973), 150–62.

<sup>107</sup> Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 7.

<sup>108</sup> Bertold Spuler, *Iran im frühislamischen Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1952), 254; Morony, *Iraq*, 198. On the *asāwira* in early Islam in general, Mohsen Zakeri, *Sāsānid soldiers and early Muslim society: the origins of 'Ayyārūn and Futuwwa* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), index, s.v.

<sup>109</sup> Patricia Crone, *Slaves on horses: the evolution of the Islamic polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 237 n. 362.

<sup>110</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 372–3. Among the titles attributed to al-Madā'inī is a *Kitāb al-asāwira*; see Ridā Tajaddud's edition of the *Fihrist* (Tehran: Maṭba'at-i Dānishgāh, 1971), 115; Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: a tenth-century survey of Muslim culture* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), I, 225 (Flügel, *Fihrist*, 103, reads *Kitāb al-ishāra*).

<sup>111</sup> Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 13.

<sup>112</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. Eduard Sachau et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904–40), V, 64.

were overwhelming the Sasanians, he and the *asāwira* enrolled in the Muslim armies instead.<sup>113</sup> This opens the door—perhaps only narrowly—for the participation of the *asāwira* at Tustar, which was reluctantly conceded.<sup>114</sup>

Indeed, it is only by presuming that they converted before Tustar that we can understand Sayf's version of events. For Sayf has it that 'Umar ordered Abū Mūsā to assign them the highest stipend, equal to that granted to any Arab tribesman, even though Abū Mūsā had nothing but disdain for their feeble effort at Tustar. A few lines of poetry that follow give voice to consequent Arab resentment:

When 'Umar (*al-fāruq*) saw the excellence of their valor  
And came to see what might come of the matter,<sup>115</sup>  
He assigned to them a stipend of two thousand,  
Having seen fit to give the 'Akk and Ḥimyar a stipend of three hundred.<sup>116</sup>

Reports that identify Sīnah/Sīneh as the *traitor* who betrayed Tustar to the Muslims presumably reflect the same anti-*asāwira* sentiments that produced these lines.<sup>117</sup>

We are on firmer ground concerning Daniel. The legendary connection between Daniel and al-Sūs is not an Islamic invention.<sup>118</sup> It had been made before Islam,<sup>119</sup> and by the seventh century (if not earlier) it appears to have gained wide currency. Thus, the Armenian history attributed to Sebēos (wr. c. 660–70) relates that the Byzantine emperor Maurice (r. 582–602) made an unsuccessful attempt to remove Daniel's body from al-Sūs to Constantinople; as in our Syriac account, here too various claims were made about the identity of the deceased.<sup>120</sup> It is in the light of this material that we should read our Syriac account: 'they [the Arabs] seized the house that is called the "House of Mār Daniel", and took the treasure there enclosed, which had been kept there on the kings' orders since the days of Darius and Cyrus'. It is in the same light that we should also read the Arabic accounts of how Daniel's body was discovered in al-Sūs; these are positively ubiquitous in the conquest tradition.<sup>121</sup>

As late antique monotheists, the conquering Muslims might be expected to have taken an interest in Daniel, in this period considered a prophet not only by Christians, but also by some Jews.<sup>122</sup> He does not appear in the Quran, but remembering that this inventory was not complete,<sup>123</sup> and assuming as

<sup>113</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2562–4; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 372–3, on the authority of 'a group of learned men' (*jamā'a min ahl al-'ilm*).

<sup>114</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 382: *yūqāl... wa-Allāh a'lam*, 'it is said...but God knows best', al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2563, 2564: *wa-qawm yaqūlūna*, 'there are some who say'.

<sup>115</sup> i.e. he recognized their potential, as well as the hazards of putting them off.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2563–4.

<sup>117</sup> On the betrayal of Tustar, below.

<sup>118</sup> Which seems to be implied by William Brinner in his translation, *The history of al-Ṭabarī*, II: *Prophets and patriarchs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 48 n. 129; and Georges Vajda, art. 'Dāniyāl' in *IE²*, II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 112b.

<sup>119</sup> See the evidence gathered by Louis Ginzberg in his *The legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1928), VI, 437 n. 20.

<sup>120</sup> *Histoire d'Héraclius*, 29–30. Cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378: *qila inna fīhi juththat Dāniyāl*.

<sup>121</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2566–7; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 378; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 6–9; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31; al-Qummī, *Tārikh-i Qummī*, 296–7; Ibn Zanjawayh (d. 251/865), *Kitāb al-anwāl*, ed. Shākir Dhīb Fayyād (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li-l-buḥūth wa-l-dirāsāt, 1986), II, 748; Ibn Abī 'Adasa (fl. 9th/15th c.), *Qisās al-anbiyā'*, Khālidi Library (Jerusalem), Ms. Ar. 86, fol. 114r. See also M. Kevran and S. Renimel, 'Suse islamique: remarques préliminaires et perspectives', *Studia Iranica* 3 (1974), 256.

<sup>122</sup> See John Barton, *Oracles of God: perceptions of prophecy in Israel after the exile* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 36–7, 99; Geza Vermes, 'Josephus' treatment of the Book of Daniel', *JJS*, 42 (1991), 158 with n. 14.

<sup>123</sup> See Sūrat Ghāfir (40), v. 78: *wa-la-qad arsalnā rusulan min qablika minhum man qasasnā 'alayka wa-minhum man lam naqṣṣ 'alayka*, 'We sent Messengers before thee; of some We have

well that this inventory gradually created, rather than reflected, a consensus, one might speculate that the conquering Muslims had open minds.<sup>124</sup>

In contrast to the attitudes of the conquering Muslims, the concerns of the later traditionists are fairly clear. First, Daniel's prophecies enjoyed some popularity in the early period, and this almost certainly reflects the broad appeal of apocalyptic texts among Christians<sup>125</sup> and Muslims alike.<sup>126</sup> In fact, Sayf (or one of his sources) betrays an Islamic triumphalism that is only fully intelligible in the light of Christian millenarian anxieties that tied the conquest of al-Sūs to the eschaton. Sayf reports that the monks and priests (*al-ruhbān wa-l-qassīsūn*) mocked the besieging Muslims from the top of the walls of the city: 'O host of Arabs, among the things taught us by our learned men and ancestors is that only the Antichrist, or an army led by the Antichrist (*qawm fihim al-dajjāl*), will conquer al-Sūs. If the Antichrist is leading you, you will take it (al-Sūs); if he is not, don't bother besieging us'.<sup>127</sup> Of course in the eyes of Muslim informants the conquests were the work not of the Antichrist, but of God Himself; and far from marking the beginning of the End, they came to mark an altogether new beginning. The successful siege of al-Sūs thus makes a mockery of the Christians and their misplaced trust, turning what must have been a familiar *topos* on its head.<sup>128</sup>

The Daniel tradition seems to have been informed by iconoclastic concerns as well.<sup>129</sup> Here it may be significant that the Syriac does not corroborate the Islamic accounts that describe the Arabs' relocation of Daniel's body. Although the story is recounted in several different ways,<sup>130</sup> all are drawn together by a shared concern to make the site inaccessible to those determined to locate—and perhaps translate—relics.<sup>131</sup>

related to thee, and some We have not related to thee' (Arberry). Cf. the relatively early discussion in 'Abd al-Malik ibn Ḥabīb (d. 238/852), *Kitāb al-ta'rikh*, ed. Jorge Aguadé (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1991), 26–7.

<sup>124</sup> In fact, occasional passages in the Islamic sources echo the Rabbis' rejection of his prophetic status, and sound like special pleading. Note, for instance, the words attributed to Abū Sabra (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2566), but particularly those of 'Alī, who answered a query by stating: *balā hādihā Dāniyāl al-hakīm wa-huwa ghayr mursal* (Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 8); cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31: *fa-innahu nabī* (but not, it appears, a *rasūl*). For a particularly rich discussion of *rasūl* and *nabī*, see Geo Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and his Ascension* (King and Saviour V) (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1955), chapters 1–4.

<sup>125</sup> For the use of the Danielic paradigm in apocalypses and histories, see G. J. Reinink, 'Ps.-Methodius: a concept of history in response to the rise of Islam', in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East, I: problems in the literary source material* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 161–6; and (in the same volume), H. J. W. Drijvers, 'The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: a Syriac apocalypse from the early Islamic period', 201–08.

<sup>126</sup> See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī (d. 463/1071), *Taqyīd al-'ilm*, ed. Yūsuf al-'Ushsh (Damascus: Dār ihyā' al-sunna al-nabawīya, 1949), 51, 56–7 (a scribe from al-Sūs copies the Book of Daniel and is scolded for doing so; first noted by Crone, *Slaves*, 18). On the popularity of Daniel among early Sasanian Jews, see Jacob Neusner, *A history of the Jews in Babylonia, II: The early Sasanian period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 236–7.

<sup>127</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2564–5.

<sup>128</sup> The presence of the Antichrist in a besieging army has a long tradition in Christian writing: for a fourth-century example, see Norman Cohn, *The pursuit of the millennium*, revised ed. (London: Pimlico, 1993), 27–8.

<sup>129</sup> A strong aversion to relics and icons is attested in an early eighth-century source from southern Iraq; for a brief summary of the unpublished Syriac disputation between a monk of Bēt Hālē and an Arab, see G. J. Reinink, trans., *Die syrische Apokalypse des pseudo-Methodius* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993; CSCO 541, *Scr. syri* 221), xlviii. See also Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it*, 465–72; for some tentative archaeological evidence for Islamic iconoclasm, see Robert Schick, *The Christian communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic rule: a historical and archaeological study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 207–09.

<sup>130</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 378; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2567; Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 8–9.

<sup>131</sup> The reason is made explicit by Ibn A'tham (*Futūḥ*, II, 8), who has 'Alī recommend that the body be reburied 'in a place where the people of al-Sūs would not be able to find his grave', cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31–2, on a Tustar corpse discussed below: 'a place known only to you two'. According to al-Qummi (*Tārikh-i Qumm*, 297), only some Qummis who just happened to be in al-Sūs were told of its location.

## Tustar I: traitors and treaties

If the historiography of the conquest of Khūzistān has generally moved little from Wellhausen's day, an exception is the siege of Tustar.<sup>132</sup> The historicity of this siege was accepted by Wellhausen and Caetani,<sup>133</sup> and continues to be accepted elsewhere; in some quarters this also includes an act of treachery on the part of a Tustarī local, which delivered the city into the Muslims' hands.<sup>134</sup> But with Noth we finally have a dissident voice. Pointing to the multiplicity of siege accounts in the Islamic conquest traditions in general, and adducing the Tustar account in particular, he argues that they must be interpreted as a feature of historical discourse: they represent 'not the reporting of history, but rather the deployment of literary stereotypes'.<sup>135</sup>

In general terms, Noth is certainly correct: siege/betrayal accounts can function stereotypically,<sup>136</sup> 'drifting' from one event to the next.<sup>137</sup> It may be that the appearance of the *topos* in the *futūh* literature is in some way related to the treacherous Jew of the *sīra*.<sup>138</sup> Since the repertoire of pre-Islamic Syriac historical writing includes siege accounts of great drama,<sup>139</sup> one might also suggest that it was popular enough to circulate widely in the Near East of late antiquity.<sup>140</sup> In any case, just as a specific *takbīr* account can be corroborated by an early Syriac source,<sup>141</sup> so too, it appears, can the occasional siege. In this particular case, accounts that relate a siege and betrayal quite clearly reflect an early—and authentic—memory of events. For there is Syriac corroboration not only for the betrayal of the city, but also for the length of the siege (two years),<sup>142</sup> as well as for the Muslims' penetration of the city through water tunnels under its walls.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>132</sup> The siege is very well attested in the Islamic sources; see Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 133, 138–42; Ibn Abi Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28–32; al-Tabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2552–6; al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 380; al-Dinawarī, *Akhbār*, 137–8; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 12–15, 18–23; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, V, 64; al-Qummi, *Tārikh-i Qumm*, 297–8. See also Bar Hebraeus, *Ta'rikh*, 174.

<sup>133</sup> Wellhausen, 'Prolegomena', 96; Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam*, IV, 457–8.

<sup>134</sup> D. R. Hill, for example, considers: 'That the entry was effected through the treachery of a citizen is quite probable, the Muslims at this time being ineffectual in siege warfare'. See his *The termination of hostilities in the early Arab conquests, A.D. 634–65* (London: Luzac, 1971), 134; 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkūb, 'The Arab conquest of Iran and its aftermath', in *Cambridge history of Iran*, IV, ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 15: 'The siege of Shustar was protracted, but in the end an Iranian's treachery—his name was Siyā—enabled the Arabs to enter the city'.

<sup>135</sup> Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 19.

<sup>136</sup> The traitor *topos* is also noted by Lawrence I. Conrad, 'The conquest of Arwād: a source-critical study in the historiography of the early medieval Near East', in Cameron and Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I, 363.

<sup>137</sup> On 'drift', see Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 109.

<sup>138</sup> Conrad, 'Arwād', 363, citing Wansbrough, *Sectarian milieu*, 18–21, 109 (on the motif of the treacherous Jew in the *sīra* tradition).

<sup>139</sup> Of the many examples that could be cited, see ps.-Zacharias Rhetor (wr. c. 550), *Historia ecclesiastica Zachariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks (Paris: L. Durbeck, 1919–21; CSCO 83–84, *Ser. syri* 38–39), VII.iii–iv (25–28/16–19), IX.xvii (132–33/90–91). Similarly, *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite* (written c. 518), ed. and trans. William Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 50/42 (guards fall asleep): 'Whether then through this remissness, as we think, or by an act of treachery, as people said, or as a chastisement from God...' (Wright's translation); and 68/59 ('deserter' helps Byzantines against Persians). Also, compare the final section of translated Syriac above (a Qatari colludes with someone who has a house on the city walls) with ps.-Joshua, 69/59–60 (defenders have built temporary houses on the walls); are we to understand that the co-conspirator was part of the force defending the city?

<sup>140</sup> It almost goes without saying that stories such as these have a very long tradition. Cf. Joshua 2, which describes how Rahab, a harlot in Jericho, admits, shelters, and cuts a deal with Israelite spies that guarantees the safety of her family; for a discussion and bibliography, see J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua: a commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 34–43.

<sup>141</sup> Crone, *Slaves*, 12.

<sup>142</sup> Thus Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, V, 64 (a variant also proposes eighteen months); Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 139 (around a year), 141 (two years or eighteen months); Ibn Abi Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28 (around a year).

<sup>143</sup> Thus Ibn Abi Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28: *fa-adkhalahu min madkhal al-mā'*; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 139: *fa-adkhalahu min madkhal al-mā' madkhalan*; Ibn A'tham, *Futūh*, II, 20:

Of course this is not to say that we should accept the Tustar traditions in their entirety. For sieges produce tales: tales of courage, piety, steadfastness, of clemency, arrogance, and hubris. As Nöldeke remarked,<sup>144</sup> the particularly long siege of Tustar produced its share of stories, and these probably explain why the conquest was invoked in apparently stereotypical fashion.<sup>145</sup> We may even have a very brief glimpse of the *Sitz im Leben* of some of the storytelling. Asked by 'Umar to speak on the conquest of Tustar, 'Ziyād (ibn Abīhi) arose and spoke with such skill that the people were astonished by his eloquence, proclaiming: Ibn 'Ubayd is a *khaṭīb*!<sup>146</sup> Needless to say, a performance such as this one earned praise not for its dogged fidelity to what happened, but by moving people; what mattered was not a close correspondence to historical truth, but rather the speaker's impressive command of a rhetoric that told a great story. Since the process by which memory was clouded by tale-telling was already well under way when we get our first look at our traditions, there is no question of finding an Islamic account that has survived unaffected: legendary material crowds our early accounts (Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Abī Shayba, and Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt),<sup>147</sup> as it crowds our later sources.

Now some of this material, such as the legendary *awā'il*, we can safely argue away, not only because they are usually so transparent, but also because they are often expendable: no serious interpretation of the conquest of Tustar turns on 'the first to light the fire at the gate of Tustar'.<sup>148</sup> The point I would emphasize here is the difficulty of distinguishing between the baby and the bath. Without our Syriac text, for example, we would not know that it was apparently only the *identity* of the traitor that was conditioned by polemics. In most of the early accounts the traitor remains stubbornly anonymous,<sup>149</sup> but exceptions are al-Dīnawarī and Abū 'Ubayda/Ibn Ishāq (as preserved in al-Qummi); in both cases the figure starts out anonymously (*rajul min ashraf ahl al-madīna, dihqānī az jumleḥ-i buzurgān-i Tustar*), but is then identified as a certain Sīna/Sīneh (*wa'smuhu Sīna, nām-i ū Sīneh*).<sup>150</sup> As we have already seen, his appearance here should probably be explained in the light of *asāwira* polemics; we may also have yet another example of the 'onomatomania' of the Islamic tradition.<sup>151</sup>

*nahr Tustar*. The 'appendix' thus clinches Gautier Juynboll's argument that something authentic lay behind Sayf's material (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2554–5: *makhraj al-mā'*); see the second appendix to his Ṭabarī translation, *The history of al-Ṭabarī, XIII: the conquest of Iraq, southwestern Persia and Egypt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 227–9. For a rehabilitation (on very different grounds) of the view that Jerusalem fell to the 'Israelites' because the latter penetrated the city's defences through an aqueduct, see Z. Abells and A. Arbib, 'Some new thoughts on Jerusalem's ancient water system', *PEQ* 127 (1995), 2.

<sup>144</sup> Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 44 n. 1.

<sup>145</sup> Tribesmen crowed about their presence at the battle, one boasting that he had participated in the battles of al-Qādisiyya, Jalūlā', Tustar, Nihāwand, and al-Yarmūk; see al-Fasawī (277/890), *Kitāb al-ma'rifa wa-l-ta'rikh*, ed. Akram Diyā' al-'Umarī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1981), I, 233. Cf. Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, ed. Ahmad Zakī al-'Adawī (Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1343–48/1925–30), III, 245 (Iṣfahān, Tustar, Mihrājān, *kuwar al-Ahwāz*, Fārs).

<sup>146</sup> *Pa-qāna Ziyād fa-takallama fa-ablagha fa-ajiba al-nās min bayānihi wa-qāfu innā Ibn 'Ubayd la-khaṭīb*; see al-Zubayrī (d. 236/851), *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Levi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1953), 244–5. The *locus classicus* for Ziyād's eloquence is his famous *khuṭba batrā'* delivered to the Basrans; on his reputation for eloquence, see Henri Lammens, 'Ziād ibn Abīhi, vice-roi de l'Iraq, lieutenant de Mo'āwiya', reprinted in his *Études sur le siècle des Omayyades* (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1930), 60.

<sup>147</sup> Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 31–2; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 138–42. Cf. also Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 18–25 (for heroes).

<sup>148</sup> Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 31.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, VIII, 34: *dihqān Tustar*; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2554: *rajul*; Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 139: *rajul min ahl Tustar*; al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, 380: *rajulan min al-a'jīm*.

<sup>150</sup> Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 138; al-Qummi, *Tarikh-i Qummi*, 297–8. Cf. Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 20, where 'Nasībēh' must be a variant of this name; also Ibn Abī Shayba, *Musannaf*, VIII, 28, where the traitor is identified as the brother of a victim of al-Hurmuzān.

<sup>151</sup> See Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 126; also Crone, *Slaves*, 16.

Of the traitor's actual identity we shall probably never know the details,<sup>152</sup> for the Nestorian authorities naturally had their own axes to grind; here, like in the Arabic, the identity of the traitor was polemically conditioned. The provenance of the Tustar traitor is suspiciously the same as that of a certain Peter, also a native of Bēt Qatrāyē, who is said to have betrayed Alexandria to the Persians in an early part of the chronicle.<sup>153</sup> In neither Alexandria nor in Tustar can we corroborate the identities of these men, and to explain why Bēt Qatrāyē is given to provide figures such as these we should probably look to the Nestorian ecclesiastical controversies that took place when our work was being assembled. For it was in the middle of the seventh century that the bishops of Fārs, and soon after, Bēt Qatrāyē, refused to acknowledge the authority of ʾIshō'yab III, who served as catholicos of the Nestorian church from 649 to 659.<sup>154</sup> Several of the letters written by ʾIshō'yab III address the problem of the recalcitrant bishops of Bēt Qatrāyē,<sup>155</sup> and one, which can be dated to the period between 649 and 659, states that George, the bishop of Shūshtrā, was among those enrolled to argue the catholicos' view.<sup>156</sup> Just as in the case of the Islamic tradition, history was apparently pressed into service to express views about the present: the Qaṭarenēs' threat to the unity of the Nestorian church in ʾIshō'yab's day gave rise to the tradition of a Qaṭarene's betrayal of the Nestorians to the Muslims in Tustar.

Our Syriac source cannot shed any direct light on a report that describes a *ṣulḥ* in Tustar, on which the Tustarīs reneged (*kafara*); the city is then said to have been reconquered by *muhājirūn*.<sup>157</sup> In its earliest datable form the tradition is credited by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/826),<sup>158</sup> as by al-Balādhurī after him, to Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), on the authority of 'Atā' al-Khurāsānī (d. 133/750).<sup>159</sup> The tradition being impossible to confirm,<sup>160</sup> we might explain it in the light of post-conquest polemics. Considering that the issue addressed by 'Atā' is a taxation anomaly—why 'Umar exempted the issue of conquest unions between the *muhājirūn* and Tustarī women—one is tempted to think that the tradition is primarily aetiological. Similarly, if the purported participation of the *muhājirūn* might have functioned to endow Tustar with high-status settlers,<sup>161</sup> so too might accounts that posit a city's

<sup>152</sup> There is no mention of a traitor in the account available to Ibn Sa'd (*Tabaqāt*, V, 64), but here Ibn Sa'd is interested only in the events that follow al-Hurmuzān's surrender.

<sup>153</sup> See 25/22. On Bēt Qatrāyē, see Jean Maurice Fiey, 'Diocèses syriens orientaux du Golfe Persique', in *Mémorial Mgr Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis* (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1969), 209–12 (reprinted in *Communautés*, Chapter II).

<sup>154</sup> For an overview of the controversy, see Fiey, 'ʾIshō'yaw le Grand'.

<sup>155</sup> See *ʾIshō'yab Patriarchae III Liber epistularum*, ed. and trans. Rubens Duval (Paris: L. Durbeccq, 1904–1905; CSCO 11–12, *Scr. syri* 11–12), nos. 17–20 in the third cycle of letters, written while ʾIshō'yab was catholicos.

<sup>156</sup> *Liber epistularum*, 259/187.

<sup>157</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 382; Ibn Zanjawayh, *Amwāl*, II, 439.

<sup>158</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī, *Musannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Rahmān al-A'zamī (Beirut: Al-Majlis, al-ʾilmī, 1390–1407/1970–87), V, 293 (first cited by Patricia Crone, 'The first-century concept of *Hijra*', *Arabica* 41 [1994], 358).

<sup>159</sup> On Ibn Jurayj and this 'Atā' (who is not to be confused with 'Atā' ibn Abī Rabāh), see Harald Motzki, *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991), 183–218.

<sup>160</sup> To expect our Syriac source to concede that Tustar's Nestorian authorities reneged on an earlier agreement—unless, of course, it was to be portrayed as heroic resistance—is perhaps as unreasonable as it is to expect the Islamic tradition to record the apparently wanton killing of local Christians (on which see below). Hill (*Termination*, 134) is sceptical of this *kufr* tradition, suggesting that it refers to another (unnamed) city.

<sup>161</sup> See Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 98, 210; and cf. Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic historical thought in the classical period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 46 (explaining the chronological and geographical organization of the *ṭabaqāt*): 'What may have been at issue is a kind of apostolic truth theory whereby the Prophet's companions and their descendants act as guarantors of the true faith in the cities where they settled'. (It almost goes without saying that the authors disagree about the reliability of the early source material.) Cf. C. F. Robinson, *Islamic historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138 ff.



*kufr* reconcile conflicting accounts of its conquest history. For while the conquest tradition concedes the *ṣulḥ ba'd fath* arrangement,<sup>162</sup> it was too awkward to argue for a *fath ba'd ṣulḥ*, since this would cast dishonour on the conquering Muslims: hence *kufr* accounts, which shift responsibility for renewing hostilities back to the conquered.

If there is a kernel of truth in all of this, it is probably that the conquest was violent. That the Islamic tradition says nothing of the killing of local Christians is to be explained not only by its relative indifference to (and absence of solid information about) the fate of the conquered,<sup>163</sup> but also by the political circumstances in which it stabilized. Clearly defined legal rights and peaceful co-existence, the latter commonly articulated in the Prophetic prohibition of killing monks,<sup>164</sup> are developments of the post-conquest period. Of course a similar thing can once again be said about the Christian tradition: had our Syriac source been written a century later, when the Christian élites had begun to work out a *modus vivendi* with the Muslims, the killing might have been conveniently forgotten as well.

Finally, an account that posits the discovery of an uncorrupted corpse of another (now unidentified) prophet in Tustar is almost certainly bogus.<sup>165</sup> It was probably invoked to support claims made in the course of the '*asabiyyāt*' that flared up between the Tustarīs and Sūsīs about Daniel's *tābūt*.<sup>166</sup> As a source of local pride, as well as a draw for pilgrims, sites such as these were obviously of some value.<sup>167</sup>

#### Tustar II: the organization of traditions

For the purposes of historical reconstruction, we can say with some confidence that reports of a siege led by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, which was then followed by a betrayal from within, reflect early and authentic memories of the events in question. How was this memory transmitted? The question is a notoriously difficult one, but in Tustar we have enough evidence to tease out some provisional answers.

We can start with the collections in which the Tustar accounts were included. The conquest traditions of Khūzistān seem to have been compiled into province-based collections (e.g. al-Madā'inī's<sup>168</sup> and Abū 'Ubayda's<sup>169</sup> *Futūḥ al-Ahwāz*), as well as into Baṣran-based collections (e.g. al-Madā'inī's *Khabar al-Baṣra wa-futūḥihā*).<sup>170</sup> Detailed descriptions of the first of these seem to be lacking in the literature, but we are fortunate to have a glimpse at the contents of the second. According to Ibn al-Nadīm, it began as follows: 'Dastumaysān, the governorship of al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba, the governorship

<sup>162</sup> Al-Tabarī *Ta'rikh*, I, 2565; cf. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 378.

<sup>163</sup> For other examples of conquest killing, see Croné and Cook, *Hagarism*, 33.

<sup>164</sup> Thus Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 195: *aṣḥāb al-ṣawāmī*.

<sup>165</sup> Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 31–2.

<sup>166</sup> These are attested for a later period; see al-Muqaddasī (wr. c. 375/985), *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifa al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906; BGA 3), 417; also noted by Claude Cahen, 'Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du Moyen Âge', *Arabica* 6 (1959), 28. The Jews of al-Sūs in Benjamin of Tudela's time are said to have argued about the tomb as well; see Benjamin of Tudela (fl. mid-12th c.), *Itinerary*, ed. and trans. Marcus Nathan Adler (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1907), 52–3.

<sup>167</sup> In the thirteenth century Tustar could claim the tomb of the sixth Imām of the Shī'a, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765); see al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), *Al-Ishāra ilā ma'rifa al-ziyāra*, trans. Janine Sourdel-Thomine as *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1957), 222–3.

<sup>168</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 103; Yāqūt, *Irshād*, V, 316.

<sup>169</sup> See above, n. 58.

<sup>170</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 103.

of Abū Mūsā, the matter (*khavar*) of al-Ahwāz, of al-Manādhir, of Nahr Tirā, of al-Sūs, of Tustar,<sup>171</sup> of the citadel (*al-qal'a*), of al-Hurmuzān, of Ḍabba ibn Miḥṣan,<sup>172</sup> of Jundaysābūr'. Why the material was assembled into this form, in addition to the more conventional *Futūḥ al-Ahwāz* form, can be explained at least in part by the administrative controversy that pitted Baṣrans against Kūfans; for what we really have is a set of traditions recounting the victorious march of Baṣran armies against the remnants of the Sasanian state.

There are, in addition, two very striking features in Ibn al-Nadīm's survey of al-Madā'inī's work. The first is that the order of titles—here representing 'section headings'—clearly reflects the sequence of events and battles as they are known to us from (most of) the surviving sources: Abū Mūsā follows al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba, and his appointment is followed by the conquests of al-Manādhir, Nahr Tirā, al-Sūs, and Tustar (Jundaysābūr being misplaced after Tustar).<sup>173</sup> Given the dearth of second- and early third-century material, it is useful to know that the hard work of establishing a more or less correct sequence was apparently finished by this time.<sup>174</sup>

The second striking feature is the detail concerning the conquest of Tustar, particularly al-Hurmuzān's role in it.<sup>175</sup> Now in his attention to al-Hurmuzān, al-Madā'inī is clearly reflecting broader trends: thus Ibn Abī Shayba has a long section on 'What was related concerning Tustar' (*mā dhukira fī Tustar*), which is dominated by al-Hurmuzān, and the otherwise laconic Khalifa ibn Khayyāt, drawing on sources that include al-Madā'inī, pauses for four pages of material on *waq'at Tustar*; here too al-Hurmuzān plays the starring role.<sup>176</sup> What makes Ibn al-Nadīm's description of al-Madā'inī's work especially interesting is his organization of this material into three discrete sections, i.e. *khavar Tustar*, *khavar al-qal'a*, and *khavar al-Hurmuzān*. The *khavar al-qal'a* must refer to a set of traditions concerning the siege of the city in general and al-Hurmuzān's sheltering inside the citadel (*qal'a*, *qaṣaba*) in particular; this is usually, but not always, described as the result of the Muslims' penetration of the city walls. The *khavar al-Hurmuzān*, it follows, would have been a collection of reports relating his surrender and meeting with 'Umar in Medina; a favourite account is a ruse by which al-Hurmuzān secured safe passage.<sup>177</sup> The concerns here are fairly easy to discern: to contrast the pious austerity of 'Umar with the imperious ostentatiousness of al-Hurmuzān—that is, to give vivid illustration to the Arabian God's victory over the polytheist Sasanians.<sup>178</sup> The dominant metaphor seems to be al-Hurmuzān's fine clothing, which is contrasted with 'Umar's spare garb; that the scene is a *topos* is almost certain.<sup>179</sup> This

<sup>171</sup> Flügel (*Fihrist*, 103) here read Dastawā, which makes enough sense (see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, II, 574); but I follow Dodge (*The Fihrist*, I, 225) and Tajaddud (*Fihrist*, 115).

<sup>172</sup> See Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, II, 28–30; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2710–13.

<sup>173</sup> The early and indecisive campaigns that go almost entirely unnoticed by our Syriac source were presumably embedded in the section on the governorship of al-Mughīra ibn Shu'ba.

<sup>174</sup> Khalifa ibn Khayyāt, who had access to al-Madā'inī's work on al-Ahwāz (*Ta'rikh*, I, 140: *qāla Abū l-Ḥasan*), may have had the good judgement to ignore his sequence when it came to Jundaysābūr.

<sup>175</sup> Caetani (*Annali dell'Islam*, III, 908–09) may have been the first to note the crucial role played by al-Hurmuzān in the conquest accounts. The advice given by al-Hurmuzān to 'Umar about the conquest of Iṣfahān is discussed by Albrecht Noth, 'Iṣfahān–Nihāwand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamische Historiographie', *ZDMG* 118 (1968), 283–4.

<sup>176</sup> Note as well that Sayf's account as preserved by al-Ṭabarī revealingly begins with biographical material on al-Hurmuzān: see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2534.

<sup>177</sup> Khalifa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 142; al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, 381.

<sup>178</sup> Thus al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2557–8; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 64–5: *al-ḥamd li'llāh alladhī adhalla ḥadhā wa-shī'atahu bi-l-Islām*, etc.

<sup>179</sup> See, for example, al-Ya'qūbī, *Historiae*, II, 163. In her article 'al-Hurmuzān' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, III (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 586b, Laura Vecchia Vaglieri concedes that al-Hurmuzān's 'arrival in Medina is described with a number of details that seem to bear a romantic stamp'.

leaves us with the problematic reading of *khavar Tustar*; if it is correct, it probably refers to the campaigning that led up to the siege.

Of course, that al-Madā'inī organized a mass of Tustarī traditions in this fashion in no way means that they were always so carefully distinguished. This is made plain by a contemporary, Ibn Abī Shayba, a *muḥaddith* who does us the favour of citing relatively full *isnāds*, and who also eschews the *akhhārīs*' practice of breaking up and rearranging *akhhār*. His first account of the battle of Tustar and its aftermath was transmitted from Qurād Abū Nūḥ ('Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghazwān, d. 207/822),<sup>180</sup> and is ultimately credited to 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakra (d. c. 100/718).<sup>181</sup> The account seems to reflect a fairly naive stage of tradition building. It takes the reader through the siege, surrender, and al-Hurmuzān's meeting with 'Umar; and for all that it presents an edifying story, organized primarily around the dialogue, it is disarmingly vague: we have but a handful of characters, and no attempt to locate the events chronologically. It may reasonably be taken to represent one late first- or early second-century Baṣran tale of the conquest. Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt had access to the same account, which he too credits to Qurād Abū Nūḥ, now via an intermediary, 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh.<sup>182</sup> Whereas Ibn Abī Shayba probably preserved this account *in extenso*, Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, here wearing an *akhhārī*'s hat, gives us a highly abbreviated version. It too enjoys pride of place in Khalīfa's presentation, but now the account is stripped of all but its essentials, and breaks off when al-Hormuzān takes refuge in his citadel. The tradition has apparently begun to fragment, in this case according to the categories reflected in al-Madā'inī's work.<sup>183</sup>

### Conclusion

One can only agree with Conrad that 'work that securely vindicates, rather than repudiates, the historicity of early Arabic accounts is extremely difficult'.<sup>184</sup> As I have tried to show, our Syriac passage can be handled in such a way so as to vindicate *and* repudiate. Since much of the preceding has also been fairly rough going, I shall conclude by restating more concisely, and briefly elaborating upon, my principal conclusions.

1. A local seventh-century Syriac source, which is historiographically independent of the Islamic tradition, can offer impressive corroboration for accounts preserved in a range of Arabic-Islamic sources, which generally date from the ninth and tenth centuries. Since the corroboration is occasionally detailed and precise, in this case there can be no doubt that the nascent historical tradition

<sup>180</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, VII.2, 77; Ibn Hajar (d. 852/1449), *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-nizāmiya, AH 1325–27), VI, 247–9; al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt *et al.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-risāla, 1401–04/1981–84), IX, 518–19; al-Safadī (d. 764/1362), *Al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Helmut Ritter, Sven Dederling *et al.* (Istanbul and Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1931–proceeding), XVIII, 217.

<sup>181</sup> See al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, 347; Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, VII.1, 138; Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-ma'ārif*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukkāsha (Cairo: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 1960), 289; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, VI, 366; Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, VI, 148–9; al-Safadī, *Wāfi*, XVIII, 128; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, IV, 319–20; Ibn al-Imād (d. 1089/1679), *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Husnī al-Jazā'irī (Cairo: Maktabat al-quḍī, AH 1350), I, 122. Al-Wāqidi also drew on 'Abd al-Raḥmān for information about al-Baṣra; see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2530.

<sup>182</sup> Khalīfa ibn Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, I, 139–40.

<sup>183</sup> Note the narrative interruption (*qāla*) that may mark the division between *khavar al-qal'a* and *khavar al-Hurmuzān* material in Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, VIII, 29:–4.

<sup>184</sup> Conrad, 'Arwād', 399 n. 213.

was in some measure continuous. The results here thus contrast sharply with another recent comparison of Arabic and Syriac sources, where it was shown that the former retain only the vaguest outlines of the conquest of Arwād, a small island off the coast of Syria. Here radical discontinuity was the lesson learned.<sup>185</sup>

Part of the explanation for the contrast may lie in the relative strengths of the Syrian and Iraqi historical traditions. For although Syria did produce more historiography than has generally been assumed, it cannot compare with that of Iraq; and what was produced in Syria was frequently slighted by later Iraqi authorities in favour of Iraqi traditions.<sup>186</sup> But since the invention of tradition was apparently not limited to Syria,<sup>187</sup> and furthermore, since the survival of some authentic material from Syria was occasionally possible as well,<sup>188</sup> this explanation cannot take us terribly far. It is thus probably more fruitful to draw a slightly different contrast. Left in the hands of the Iraqis, for whom the fate of the Mediterranean island of Arwād could hardly have constituted a serious concern, such conquest tradition as there was disintegrated almost entirely.<sup>189</sup> By contrast, we have seen that the conquest of Khūzistān in general, and Tustar in particular, mattered a great deal to the neighbouring Baṣrans and Kūfans;<sup>190</sup> indeed, were it not for the Kūfan/Baṣran debates, much more material might have been lost. It may seem trite to point out that history that matters is more readily transmitted than history that does not; but in this case it bears repeating. If we assume that the tradition remained oral beyond the lifetime of the participants, as we must,<sup>191</sup> the continuing interests of the Baṣrans and Kūfans in the conquest fate of cities to the south provide the best explanation for the survival of material in oral form. There is no general life expectancy for oral traditions.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.*, particularly 388: '...the fact remains that it can be demonstrated in every case that the Arab-Islamic material for the conquest of Arwād does not and cannot consist of accounts passed on from one generation to the next in a continuous tradition beginning with the generation of the Arab conquerors. Instead, the beginnings of the extant tradition for this event must be sought among Umayyad storytellers piecing together narratives with only the barest shreds of genuinely historical information to guide or restrain the process of reconstruction'.

<sup>186</sup> See Fred M. Donner, 'The problem of early Arabic historiography in Syria', in Muhammad 'Adnān al-Bakhīt, ed., *Proceedings of the second symposium on the history of Bilād al-Shām during the early Islamic period up to 40 A.H./640 A.D.* (Amman: University of Jordan, 1987), I, 1–27. On a Damascene tradition, see Gerhard Conrad, *Abū'l-Husain al-Rāzī (–347/958) und seine Schriften. Untersuchungen zur frühen Damaszener Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991). See now J. Lindsay, ed., *Ibn 'Asākir and early Islamic history* (Princeton: Darwin Press), 2001.

<sup>187</sup> See Noth, 'Iṣfahān-Nihāwand'; Donner, *Conquests*, 198–9 (on Buwayb); and now Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*.

<sup>188</sup> See Donner, *Conquests*, 144 (al-Wāqidī apparently corroborated by the Syriac tradition; there is no evidence that the latter depended on the Islamic).

<sup>189</sup> Note that it is the Syriac tradition, in the person of Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785), that quite naturally transmits a more believable version of events.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Lecker's comments à propos of Abū 'Ubayda ('Biographical notes', 17): '...the conquests of the Sawād and the neighboring Ahwāz were a kind of local history for the Baṣran A.'U'.

<sup>191</sup> The case that the early tradition was written down earlier is occasionally asserted (see, most recently, Khalidī, *Arabic historical thought*, 14, 26–7), but it has not been demonstrated. Much as one would like to see early Islamic scripturalism function as a catalyst for historical writing (cf. the role of Christianity in the shift from roll to codex), we lack the evidence to see this at work. For two recent views on the problem of the origins of Islamic historiography, see F. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins: the beginnings of Islamic historical writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998) and Robinson, *Islamic historiography*.

<sup>192</sup> On the social function of oral history, see John Kenyon Davies, 'The reliability of oral tradition', in L. Foxhall and J. K. Davies, eds, *The Trojan War: its historicity and context* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1984), 90; O. Murray, 'Herodotus and oral history', in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt, eds, *Achaemenid history, II: the Greek sources* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987), 99.

Of course, if the transmission of historical memory was not completely discontinuous, it was anything but disinterested. It is abundantly clear that much of the material was conditioned, and in some cases generated, by post-conquest polemics about spoils and administration. Even a tradition that at first glance suggests only simple storytelling of the *awā'il* variety, e.g. 'the first to light the fire at the gate of Tustar',<sup>193</sup> is adduced by Abū Yūsuf in his discussion of the division of spoils.<sup>194</sup> One can disagree with Dennett's qualifications of Becker, or Noth's qualifications of Dennett, but there is no denying the insight that draws together all their work, and which Calder has emphasized: conquest accounts 'should be recognized as bearers of ideological and juristic messages'.<sup>195</sup> To take only one example: if one's share of the booty was determined in part by whether one was walking rather than riding, and if the latter, on what kind of mount,<sup>196</sup> how are we to describe how such-and-such a city was taken?

What our Syriac source shows, however—and this needs to be emphasized—is that the Khūzistān tradition is more than the accumulation of details arbitrarily added by storytellers, more than *topoi* and *schemata*, and finally more than back-projected legal precedents or assertions of state and provincial power. All of these do appear, crowding, and no doubt occasionally crowding out, authentic material. But some authentic material *did* survive, and since some of this at first appears to be manifestly stereotypical, the task of distinguishing between authentic and unauthentic is no simple matter. The conquest of Tustar shows many of the signs that usually betray literary effect, e.g. statements describing the enemy's strength,<sup>197</sup> a great siege, tribal boasting, and eschatological allusions, but for all these it cannot be dismissed as merely topological.

2. The survival of authentic material is most striking at the level of individual scenes (e.g. the siege/betrayal at Tustar; Daniel's tomb at al-Sūs), although it is certainly true that legendary elements can arise here too (e.g. the traitor's name at Tustar). The results thus support Noth's view that the conquest traditions as we have them are generally composite reconstructions, assembled out of discrete units, rather than pieces of a now-lost coherent whole.<sup>198</sup>

This said, our Syriac source can also corroborate the Islamic tradition on matters that are not 'scene-specific', but rather represent a more synthetic understanding of events, e.g. the principal role played by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī in the protracted campaigns, and matters of sequence as well, particularly the secondary capitulations of al-Sūs and Tustar. This, in turn, suggests that at least some accounts concerning Tustar and al-Sūs were integrated early on into a fairly broad view of the Khūzistān campaign, that the collectors and systematizers of the second and third centuries had the historiographical resources and sophistication to overcome the limitations of source material that did not, or some combination of both. It is the nature of our evidence—and the state of research—that we cannot say much more than this. One can

<sup>193</sup> See above, n. 148.

<sup>194</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 198.

<sup>195</sup> Norman Calder, *Studies in early Muslim jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 151.

<sup>196</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, I, 2556; Abū Yūsuf, *Kharāj*, 18; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, 183–7; Qudāma ibn Ja'far (d. c. 310/922), *Kutāb al-kharāj*, ed. Ḥusayn Mu'nis (Cairo: Dār al-shurūq, 1987), 59.

<sup>197</sup> See, for example, al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 380: *wa-bihā shaykat al-'adaw wa-hadduhum*.

<sup>198</sup> Noth/Conrad, *Early Arabic historical tradition*, 5. On *akhbār* more generally, see Stefan Leder, 'The literary use of the *khbar*: a basic form of historical writing', in Cameron and Conrad, eds, *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, I, 277–315.

speculate that the memory of Abū Mūsā was kept alive by descendants in al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa;<sup>199</sup> and we have also seen that the correct sequence of battles was already in place by the early third century. But these are just two pieces of a much larger puzzle.

3. The case of Khūzistān offers yet another illustration of how the 'schools theory' of the early tradition fails us.<sup>200</sup> If Ibn A'tham more frequently seems to have got things right, no single authority either resisted the forces of distortion completely, or monopolized early material entirely. In some cases the consensus of the Islamic tradition was vindicated; in others (e.g. the conquest of Jundaysābūr), minority views were corroborated. Sayf ibn 'Umar seems to have been mistaken about the role of Abū Sabra at Tustar;<sup>201</sup> on the other hand, he seems to have been the only authority who had reasonably good material on the truce(s) between al-Hurmuzān and the campaigning Muslims. Indeed Sayf's account, which describes the tribute arrangements between al-Hurmuzān and the Muslims in an impressively imprecise way, passes Noth's standards for authenticity with flying colours.<sup>202</sup> The absence of detailed tribute accounts is an altogether striking characteristic of the Khūzistānī conquest accounts in general, and this too seems to be the case for all of our traditionists, regardless of their provenance.

4. As far as the reconstruction of conquest history is concerned, we can have some confidence that Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, then based in al-Baṣra, led a Muslim force that followed up earlier battles in Khūzistān; the capitulations of al-Sūs and Tustar, which we can actually describe in some detail, marked the turning point in his campaign. That the Sasanian defence and Muslim advance concentrated on these cities can be explained by their administrative significance in the late Sasanian period.<sup>203</sup> At least one truce was brokered, and as others preserved in very early sources,<sup>204</sup> it was apparently negotiated by commanders on the scene; it stipulated the payment of tribute and described a frontier. Our source cannot corroborate the Islamic tradition in dating matters, but it gives no reason to doubt that Tustar had fallen by 22 or 23 AH.

<sup>199</sup> See Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), *Jamharat ansāb al-'arab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1977), 397–8; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 9. The significance of family and clan traditions is emphasized by Michael Lecker, 'The death of the Prophet Muḥammad's father: did Wāqidi invent some of the evidence?', *ZDMG* 145 (1995), 11. On family traditions in a different oral tradition, see Rosalind Thomas, *Oral tradition and written record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), chapter 2.

<sup>200</sup> The argument for distinct historiographical schools was undercut by Albrecht Noth long ago; see his 'Der Charakter der ersten grossen Sammlungen von Nachrichten zur frühen Kalifenzeit', *Der Islam* 47 (1971), 168–99.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. the case of Abū 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāh (Albrecht Noth, *Futūḥ-history and Futūḥ-historiography*, *Al-Qantara* 10 [1989], 459), who seems to appear in Damascus conquest accounts only to function within the manifestly late *sulh/anwa* paradigm.

<sup>202</sup> 'Je weniger eine Abgabe Steuercharakter hat, umso eher kann sie als authentisch angesehen werden; je mehr sie einer Steuer ähnelt, umso mehr ist ihre Authentizität zu bezweifeln.' See Albrecht Noth, 'Die literarisch überlieferten Verträge der Eroberungszeit als historische Quellen für die Behandlung der unterworfenen Nicht-Muslime durch ihre neuen muslimischen Oberherren', in Tilman Nagel et al., eds, *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islam*, I (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1973), 300. For a balanced view of Sayf, see Ella Landau-Tasseron, 'Sayf ibn 'Umar in medieval and modern scholarship', *Der Islam* 67 (1990), 1–26.

<sup>203</sup> See Rika Gyselen, *La géographie administrative de l'empire sassanide: les témoignages sigillographiques* (Paris: Groupe pour l'étude de la civilisation, du Moyen-Orient, 1989), *passim*; J. Markwart, *A catalogue of the provincial capitals of Ērānshahr* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1931), 19.

<sup>204</sup> See ps.-Sebeōs, *Histoire d'Héraclius*, 147, 164.

*Appendix*

Immediately following upon the passages I have translated above is an account alluding to the conquest of Syria and Egypt, and for the benefit of those interested, the following is a translation.<sup>205</sup>

Afterwards (*hātarkēn*) a man from the Arabs named Kāled came and went to the West, and took the lands and towns as far as 'Arab'.<sup>206</sup> Heraclius, the king of the Byzantines, heard [this] and sent a large army against them, whose leader was called S-q-y-l-r-ā.<sup>207</sup> The Arabs defeated them, annihilating more than 100,000 Byzantines, whose commander they [also] killed. They also killed Īshō'dād, the bishop of Hirtā, who was there with 'Abdmasih;<sup>208</sup> this [Īshō'dād] was undertaking an embassy between the Arabs and Byzantines. The Arabs [thus] took control of all the lands of Syria and Palestine. They wanted to enter the Egyptian [lands] as well, but they were unable, because the border (*thōmā*) was guarded by the Patriarch of Alexandria with a strong and large army. For he had blocked the marches of the land,<sup>209</sup> and had built walls along the banks of the Nile in all the land. Only with difficulty, because of their (i.e. the walls') height,<sup>210</sup> were the Arabs able to enter and take the land of Egypt, Thebaid, and Africa.

If only because of a possible allusion to the enigmatic al-Muqawqis, this passage deserves some attention.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>205</sup> The passage begins on 37: 15/31: 3 and ends on 38: 3/31: 20.

<sup>206</sup> Often glossed as western northern Mesopotamia under Byzantine rule; see Nöldeke, 'Chronik', 14 n. 4; *Synodicon orientale, ou recueil de synodes nestoriens*, ed. and trans. J.-B. Chabot (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1902; Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale, 37), 617.

<sup>207</sup> 37: 19, which is to be compared with Nöldeke's and Brock's reconstruction of S[ac]ell[ar]ius in what is called the 'record dated to AD 637' in Palmer, *Seventh century*, 3; and Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. Karl de Boor (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1883–85), AM 6125: *sakellarios*; trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes confessor* (Oxford, 1997), 468f. For discussion see Donner, *Conquests*, 145–6; Walter Kaegi, *Byzantium and the early Islamic conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 99–100.

<sup>208</sup> The presence of Īshō'dād in Syria is curious, and it may be that this sentence is out of place; Fiey ('L'Élam...(suite)', 137), seems to put this episode of killing in Tustar. In 'Abdmasih we almost certainly have 'Abd al-Masih ibn 'Amr/'Amr ibn 'Abd al-Masih, an Azdi native of al-Hira, who is well attested in the Islamic tradition: see al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ*, 243; and Donner, *Conquests*, 183, 331 n. 83, for more literature.

<sup>209</sup> Literally: 'the entrances and exits'.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. the accounts beginning at 30: 25/26: 15. Walls were generally seen as an effective defence against Arabs (in contrast to siege-laying imperial armies): see Procopius (wr. 550), *The history of the wars*, ed. and trans. H. B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961 reprint), II.xiv.12; and 'Joshua the Stylite', *The Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, 63/54.

<sup>211</sup> The testimony of the *Khūzistān chronicle* is noted in the revised edition of Butler (Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab conquest of Egypt*, ed. P. M. Fraser, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978], ix), but it did not make it into the text proper. On al-Muqawqis, see K. Öhrnberg, art. 'al-Muqawqis' in *ET*<sup>2</sup>, VII (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 511a–513a; and Butler, *Conquest*, Appendix C; on the Great Wall of Egypt, see Butler, *Conquest*, i97–8; and on the walls and fortifications in general, Wladislaw Kubiak, *Al-Fustat: its foundation and early urban development* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1987), 50–57.

## SYRIAC VIEWS OF EMERGENT ISLAM

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It requires a strenuous effort of the imagination in order to counteract the advantage of hindsight that we enjoy in looking at the events of the seventh century. How did contemporaries view them? When did the people of Syria and Mesopotamia begin to realize that the Arabs were there for good? How did they reconcile this realization, once attained, with their total world view? How aware were they of the religious background of the conquests?

It is questions such as these that the Syriac sources,<sup>1</sup> sometimes contemporary with the events themselves, can help to answer. Here we have the expression of an articulate and often highly sophisticated section of that part of society which provided the continuum, as it were, in the shifting sands of the seventh century.

On 24 December 633, at a monastery outside Damascus, a sumptuous Gospel manuscript was completed,<sup>2</sup> miraculously to survive the turbulent events of the next few years, to give us some hint of the lack of awareness of the storm clouds over the horizon.

On Christmas day, a year later, the Patriarch Sophronios preached in Jerusalem, and saw in the Arab occupation of Bethlehem a punishment for sin that could be easily remedied: "We have only to repent, and we shall blunten the Ishmaelite sword . . . and break the Hagarene bow, and see Bethlehem again."<sup>3</sup>

It was not long before things began to take on a different look: in a letter dated between 634 and 640 Maximus the Confessor speaks of a "barbaric nation from the desert" as having overrun a land not their own, and hints that the appearance of Anti-Christ is at hand.<sup>4</sup> The Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati, of much the same date, fits contemporary events into the apocalyptic scheme of the four beasts of Daniel chapter 7, but Rome is still the fourth beast, simply humiliated by the succession of horns.<sup>5</sup> It is not until the end of the century, with the



Armenian Sebeos, that we find a radical reinterpretation of the beasts, with the Ishmaelites replacing Rome as the fourth beast.<sup>6</sup>

## II

In assessing the Christian reactions to the conquests of the seventh century, it is essential to take into account the ecclesiastical allegiance of the various sources, since each of the three main communities, Chalcedonian, Monophysite and Nestorian, came to provide their own particular interpretation of these events. Since I shall be concentrating on Syriac sources, this means that the viewpoints that we shall be given are mainly Monophysite and Nestorian; here and there, however, we can cast a glance at the more scanty Chalcedonian texts (both monothelete and dyothelete) on the topic, mostly in Greek.

Two main types of evidence will be employed, the world chronicles and the apocalyptic literature. As we shall see the division between these two genres is not always as clear-cut as one might have expected. The three world chronicles which have most to say about the seventh century all happen to be products of the Syriac "renaissance" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, namely the chronicles of the patriarch Michael, the anonymous writer *ad annum* 1234, and Bar Hebraeus.<sup>7</sup> Thanks, however, to the fact that these works relied very heavily on much earlier sources, two in particular, Jacob of Edessa (who died in 708) and Dionysios of Tellmahre (who died in 845),<sup>8</sup> we can recapture from them something of the attitudes of two great scholars and thoughtful men who lived much closer to the events themselves, and who were both active in the general area of Syria and western Mesopotamia.

Before looking in greater detail at these chronicles, however, it is worth stressing that the early decades of the seventh century had already been exceedingly turbulent for the populace of Syria-Mesopotamia; the area had served as the fulcrum of Persian-Byzantine hostilities, and the Byzantine reconquest under Heraklios had brought with it vicious persecution of the dominant Monophysite community by the Byzantine (Chalcedonian) authorities. In view of this background, the sense of relief at the change of rule, from Byzantine to Arab, that we find in these Monophysite chronicles is hardly surprising. The Arab invasions are seen primarily as a punishment for Byzantine ecclesiastical policy. In a famous passage we find the following analysis:

Heraklios did not allow the orthodox (i.e., Syrian Orthodox, or Monophysites, as I shall call them to avoid confusion) to present themselves before him, and he refused to hear their complaints about acts of vandalism committed on their churches (i.e. by Chalcedonians). This is why the God of vengeance, who has power over the kingdom of men on earth, giving it to whom he wants and raising up to it the lowliest of men,<sup>9</sup> seeing the overflowing measure of the wickedness of the Romans--how they used every means to destroy our people and our church, so that our (religious) community was almost annihilated--(this is why) he roused up and brought the Ishmaelites from the land of the South--the most despised and insignificant of the peoples of the earth--to effect through them our deliverance. In this we gained no small advantage, in that we were saved from the tyrannical rule of the Romans. . . .<sup>10</sup>

This sort of sectarian theological interpretation would appear to have been the standard one in Monophysite circles, and John of Nikiu applies it equally to the Egyptian situation.<sup>11</sup> *Mutatis mutandis* we find interpretations based on ecclesiastical lines among the Nestorians and Chalcedonians as well. Thus the Chalcedonian Anastasios<sup>12</sup> sees the Arab successes as a punishment for Constans II's pro-monothelite policy and his treatment of Pope Martin.<sup>13</sup> The revival of dyothelete theology under Constantine IV, on the other hand, effects peace between the two empires, and civil war among the Arabs. The monothelite author of a Syriac life of Maximos,<sup>14</sup> in contrast, saw the Arab successes in Africa as a sign of God's wrath, bringing punishment on every place that had accepted Maximos' error (i.e. dyothelete theology). To the Nestorian John of Phenek, to whom we shall come back later, the Arabs were sent by God as a punishment for heresy (i.e. Chalcedonian and Monophysite).

### III

Syriac writers are generally much better informed on the religious teachings of Islam than are Byzantine writers, and one of the interesting things that the chronicles have to say concerns the links between Muḥammad and the Jews.

On Muḥammad's early career it is only a few late chronicles that provide any details, and these are of no special interest to us here.<sup>15</sup> Much more

important is a section in our Monophysite chronicles, deriving from Dionysios of Tellmahre, which describes Muḥammad's contacts with Jews in Palestine.<sup>16</sup> Impressed by their monotheism and the excellence of the land of Palestine "that had been given to them (i.e. the Jews) as a result of their belief in a single God," Muḥammad returned home and promised to those who accepted his new religious teaching that "God would give them a fine land flowing with milk and honey."<sup>17</sup>

In this section we are also given a brief outline of the Prophet's teaching, where it is specifically stated that he accepted the Torah and the Gospels, apart from the crucifixion narrative.<sup>18</sup> Muslim acceptance of the Torah is also a point made in a mid seventh century document, the colloquium between the Monophysite patriarch John and an unnamed emir.<sup>19</sup>

Further hints of Jewish ideology lying behind the early conquests are perhaps to be found in the anonymous chronicler's account of Abū Bakr's address to the four generals on their departure for Syria, where the phraseology is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 20: 10 ff, recording Moses' instructions to the Israelites.<sup>20</sup> Likewise 'Umar's alleged building of the Dome of the Rock on the site of the temple of Solomon is specifically described in one chronicle as the rebuilding of the temple.<sup>21</sup> The anonymous chronicler again reflects Deuteronomy (this time 17: 16 ff) in the section on 'Uthmān and his "per-version of the law and modest manner of the kings who preceded him."<sup>22</sup> (Incidentally this chronicler, alone of the Syriac writers, knows of 'Uthmān as the collector cum editor of the Qur'ān.)<sup>23</sup>

#### IV

Although the chronicles generally present rather dry and bare lists of events, we do find an occasional anecdote included that is intended to illustrate some aspect of the change of regime. In that these probably represent popular attitudes, they should be judged worthy of our attention.

Bar Hebraeus retails the story that, in the face of Arab successes, Heraklios gathered some bishops and clergy and enquired how they viewed the situation. After they had all made their own observations, the emperor himself volunteered a statement: "As far as their way of life, manners and beliefs are concerned, he said, I see this people as the faint glimmer of first dawn--when it is no longer completely dark, but at the same time it is not yet completely light."

Asked to elucidate further, he went on: "Yes, they have indeed left darkness far behind, in that they have rejected the worship of idols and worship the One God, but at the same time they are deprived of the perfect light, in that they still fall short of complete illumination in the light of our Christian faith and orthodox confession."<sup>24</sup>

The story itself is no doubt apocryphal: this is obvious, if for no other reason, from the fact that the judgment pronounced has a theological rather than political concern behind it. The positive attitude to Islam is interesting,<sup>25</sup> and it finds a close parallel in the writings of Timothy I, the Nestorian patriarch.<sup>26</sup> The story probably represents a reflection later in date than the seventh century, since sources best anchored in the seventh century suggest that there was greater awareness that a new empire (*malkuta*) had arisen, than that a new religion had been born. One Chalcedonian (monothelite) source from the end of the century can still openly speak of "paganism."<sup>27</sup>

Another anecdote concerns precisely this transfer of power, from the Persians to the Arabs; it also says something of the attitudes of Christian Arabs. As we shall see it has a surprising ancestry. In the course of Yezdegerd's final struggle with the Arabs, the Persian army was encamped on the Euphrates near Kūfa, and a spy, a man from Ḥirta d-Na'man, was sent to the Arab encampment. When the spy arrived he saw a Ma'add tribesman outside the encampment, who urinated, sat down to eat and then proceeded to remove the fleas from his clothing. They got talking and, asked what he was doing, the tribesman replied: "As you see, I am introducing something new, and getting rid of something old; and at the same time I am killing enemies." The spy, having puzzled over the matter, eventually came to the conclusion that this signified that "a new people was coming in, and an old one departing and that the Persians would be killed."<sup>28</sup>

The interesting thing about this story is the way it portrays the dawning of an awareness, on the part of the Christian Arabs, that the invaders were there to stay, and that their present masters, the Sasanids, were already doomed. Actually we have here, adapted to a totally new setting, a slightly modified version of an anecdote about an encounter between Homer and some Arcadian fishermen who, when questioned by the poet as to what they were doing, made a very similar reply.<sup>29</sup> Homer, unfortunately, was not as quick-witted as the spy from Ḥirta, and he

died of frustration at not being able to solve the riddle.

## V

We should now turn briefly to the terminology used in the Syriac texts dealing with the seventh century. If we can identify the conceptual framework into which Syriac-speaking Christians tried to fit the new situation of their times, we can perhaps learn something of the way in which they regarded their new overlords.

All the Syriac writers of this period, including those active in the middle of the century, would appear to be writing with sufficient hindsight for them to be aware that Byzantine and Persian rule was at an end, and that the Arabs were there to stay, representing a new empire, or "kingdom." The caliphs, and Muḥammad himself, are regularly described as "kings," and the malkuta, kingdom of the Arabs, is seen as the direct heir of the "kingdoms" of Byzantium and Persia. No doubt behind this terminology lies the influence of the book of Daniel, with its picture of successive world empires. We have already seen how, from a very early date, this book played an important role in the process of fitting the new state of affairs into an already accepted conceptual framework.

For Muḥammad the title "prophet" is not very common, "apostle" even less so.<sup>30</sup> Normally he is simply described as the first of the Arab kings,<sup>31</sup> and it would be generally true to say that the Syriac sources of this period see the conquests primarily as Arab, and not Muslim. There is, however, one interesting term used of Muḥammad that turns up in both Monophysite and Nestorian sources, namely mhaddyana, "guide,"<sup>32</sup> a term that has no obvious ancestry, although the related haddaya is a Christological title in early Syriac literature.

The term caliph occurs only once, in a Syriacized form, in the texts covering the seventh century, and this is in direct speech, addressed to 'Uthmān.<sup>33</sup> Here, as we have seen, "king" is the normal term employed, although Isho'yahb, writing in the middle of the century, uses the term shalliṭa rabba.<sup>34</sup> For local governors the Syriac sources either take over the Arabic term amira,<sup>35</sup> or use the colourless words shalliṭa (Isho'yahb) or risha, neither of which had served as part of the technical vocabulary for officials of the Byzantine and Sasanid empires in earlier Syriac sources.

As is well known, the Arabs are generally referred to in Syriac sources as Ṭayy. As far as their identity and origin were concerned, seventh century writers already had available a tradition going back to Eusebios, according to which the Arabs had been classified as the descendants of Ishmael and Hagar. The term Ṭayy itself has no religious overtones, and could imply pagan, Christian or Muslim. Where it was thought necessary to specify them as Muslim the term used in early texts is mḥaggraye,<sup>36</sup> which can also be used alone. In origin the term would appear to be connected with muhājirūn, but to most Syriac writers it probably came to be more or less synonymous with bnay Hagar, "sons of Hagar." This latter term, however, could evidently (to judge by a couple of passages in Michael the Syrian)<sup>37</sup> bear pejorative overtones, presumably not present in another term, "sons of Ishmael," also commonly found.<sup>38</sup> The pejorative overtones in Michael's Chronicle certainly fit in with Sozomen's statement that the Sarakenoi disguised their servile origins by calling themselves Ishmaelites, rather than Hagarenes.<sup>39</sup>

## VI

Of the east Syrian, or Nestorian, sources John of Phenek, writing in the 690s, is the most important, but before turning to him we should first glance at a few passages in the correspondence of the Catholicos Isho'yahb III, who died in 659.<sup>40</sup> As a background to these two writers two things need to be kept in mind. First, and most obviously, the Nestorian church, living under the Sasanid empire, had problems very different from those that faced the Monophysites under Byzantine rule. Secondly, the seventh century saw the expansion of the Monophysite church into north Mesopotamia at the expense of the Nestorians. We shall see that both these factors colored our author's attitudes.

Isho'yahb takes a very positive attitude towards the events of his time.<sup>41</sup> To him there was no doubt that God had given dominion (shultāna) to the Ṭayy.<sup>42</sup> What is more, he describes them as "commenders of our faith," who honor the clergy, the churches and the monasteries. Writing in the same letter (addressed to Shem'un, bishop of Rev Ardashir) about the wholesale apostasy of the Christian Community in Mazon, or Oman, he says that there was no question of pressure to convert being exerted, only of temporal financial disadvantage, and he upbraids his correspondent for the laxity of his clergy in the whole shameful affair.<sup>43</sup>

Others of Isho'yahb's correspondents had also tried to use the Arab invasions as an excuse for their own failures. Thus the clergy of Nineveh (Mosul) evidently attributed the Nestorian losses to the Monophysites in north Mesopotamia to the fact that the new rulers favored the Monophysites. Utter nonsense, says Isho'yahb, it is quite untrue that the ṭayyaye mḥaggraye helped the Theopaschites (i.e. Monophysites), the losses are entirely your own fault.<sup>44</sup>

Some of his correspondents evidently looked back to Sasanid rule with a certain degree of nostalgia, which we are also to find later in John of Phenek,<sup>45</sup> but this only brings a sharp rebuke from the Catholicos.<sup>46</sup>

Isho'yahb was evidently on excellent terms with the Arab authorities, and they supported his case when some of his clergy in Kerman revolted against his authority and appealed unsuccessfully to the "chief shalliṭa, chief of the officials of the time."<sup>47</sup> Isho'yahb's attitude is found spelt out even more explicitly in the writings of one of his most famous successors on the patriarchal throne, Timothy I (died 823). Timothy writes that "the Arabs are today held in great honor and esteem by God and men because they forsook idolatry and polytheism, and worshipped and honored the One God." "God honored Muḥammad greatly, and subdued before his feet two powerful kingdoms, of the Persians and of the Romans; in the case of the Persians God effected this because they worshipped creatures instead of the Creator, in that of the Romans, because they had propagated the theopaschite doctrine."<sup>48</sup>

John of Phenek, writing some decades later than Isho'yahb, is no less convinced that the "sons of Hagar" were divinely called:

We should not think of their advent as something ordinary, but as due to divine working. Before calling them, God had prepared them beforehand to hold Christians in honor; thus they also had a special commandment from God concerning our monastic station, that they should hold it in honor.<sup>49</sup> . . . How otherwise, apart from God's help, could naked men, riding without armor or shield, have been able to win:<sup>50</sup> God called them from the ends of the earth in order to destroy, through them, a sinful kingdom (Amos 9:8), and to humiliate, through them, the proud spirit of the Persians.<sup>51</sup> As proof texts of the divine calling of the Arabs, John adduces Zechariah 3:2, Deuteronomy 32:30 and

Genesis 16:12.

John also sees the advent of the Arabs as a punishment for Christian laxity, apparently chiefly in matters of doctrine (i.e. failure to oppose Monophysites and Chalcedonians sufficiently vigorously). Because of the bloodshed of the conquests John sees the Arabs as themselves punished by a divided rule. In contrast to Monophysite writers, who tend to view the rule of Abū Bakr and 'Umar in idealistic terms, John sees only division until the reign of Mu'āwiya, in whose time there was unprecedented peace, "such as our forefathers had never experienced."<sup>52</sup>

John specifically states that all the new rulers required was payment of taxes, and that otherwise there was complete religious freedom. Moreover he definitely sees the new rulers in ethnic and not religious terms: "among the Arabs are not a few Christians, some belonging to the heretics (i.e. Monophysites), and some to us (i.e. Nestorians)."<sup>53</sup>

The peace brought by Mu'āwiya, however, only led to further laxity--in particular allowing the Monophysites to spread eastwards. It is in punishment for this that there followed the troubled times under Mu'āwiya's successors. Yazdin (i.e. Yazīd) is castigated for his immorality, which is contrasted with (Ibn) Zubayr's zeal against the "sinful westerners." (Ibn) Zubayr's death John regards effectively as the collapse of the Arab "kingdom": "from that time on the kingdom of the Ṭayy was no longer firmly established."<sup>54</sup>

To top the political turmoil comes the plague of A.H.67 (A.D.686/7), and it is at this point in his narrative that John begins to strike an apocalyptic note: "the end of the world has arrived." The only thing lacking so far is the advent of the Deceiver (i.e. Antichrist);<sup>55</sup> we are in fact experiencing the beginnings of the eschatological birthpangs. John specifically sees the successes of the "captives" liberated by Mukhtār as a sign of the coming destruction of the Ishmaelites and the end of Ṭayy rule.<sup>56</sup>

John of Phenek was not alone in seeing the turmoils of the last decades of the seventh century as the beginnings of the end, and his work serves as an excellent bridge to the last work we should consider, the Apocalypse attributed to Methodios, dated to the second half of the seventh century. This work was written in Syriac, but was soon translated into Greek and thence into both Slavonic and Latin, the last being a language in which it won its greatest popularity. I shall base myself in what follows on the original Syriac, surviving complete in a single,



as yet unpublished, manuscript,<sup>57</sup> since the Greek and Latin versions have both been considerably reworked in places.

The Apocalypse attributed to Methodios was evidently written in the region of Sinjar,<sup>58</sup> about A.D.690, in any case (as we shall see) before 692. After a highly individual account of the pre-Christian empires, the author makes it quite clear that, in contrast to the kingdom of the Persians, already uprooted, that of the Greeks, being Christian, will never be completely dominated by any other. God has brought the "barbaric" Ishmaelites into the kingdom of the Christians, not out of any love he had for them, but because of the sins of the inhabitants (especially in the matter of sexual licence). The oppressive rule of the "tyrants" will last ten apocalyptic "weeks" (i.e. seventy years), after which the Greek king will suddenly rise up and destroy the unsuspecting Ishmaelites: he himself will attack the desert of Yathrib from the Red Sea, while his sons will finish off those Ishmaelites who are left in the "land of promise."<sup>59</sup>

There follows a period of the "last peace," in which apostates will receive their reward, and priests no longer be subject to taxation. Next, the nations enclosed by Alexander in the gates of the north will burst out, only to be destroyed by an archangel in the plain of Joppa, after wreaking havoc for one "week." Thereupon the king of the Greeks will enter Jerusalem for 1½ "weeks" (here also specified as 10½ years), after which the "false Christ" will appear. The Greek king will then go to Golgotha, place his crown on the cross, and commit the kingdom to God. Both crown and cross are raised to heaven, thus fulfilling Psalm 68:31.<sup>60</sup>

This psalm actually speaks of Kush as "stretching out her hands to God," and it is clear that some of the author's contemporaries understood this to mean that a savior would appear from Kush. Our author, however, is at pains to refute this, and he does so by providing an elaborate genealogy for the Greek kingdom, going back to Alexander's Kushite mother.<sup>61</sup> In this way he is able to claim that it is really the Greek kings who are meant by Kush here.<sup>62</sup>

The author regards the tyranny of the Arabs as coming to an end at the conclusion of the tenth "week," in other words after seventy years, which would be 692.<sup>63</sup> He himself is quite clearly living in the final "week," thus between 685 and 692--precisely the period that John of Phenek was describing as the "last days." John specifically mentions

the "plague" of A.H.67 (A.D.686/7) as adding to the miseries; "plague" is among the ills mentioned by Pseudo-Methodios, but what he finds really oppressive is the tax system:<sup>64</sup> "even orphans, widows and holy men will have to pay poll tax," he writes. And in this statement we have, I believe, the key to the precise dating of the Apocalypse: it must belong to the period immediately before (or possibly during) the census of 'Abd al-Malik, on the basis of which the tax system in Mesopotamia was reformed. The Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysios gives A.G.1003 as the year of this reform, i.e. A.D.691/2.<sup>65</sup> I would suggest that the Apocalypse of Methodios should be dated to 690 or 691, at a time when rumors about the new tax laws were rife: in antiquity, as today, a census always gave rise to strong feelings. 690-1 was significantly also a time when hopes of a Byzantine recovery could be nurtured without too great a degree of improbability: 678 had seen a major Byzantine victory, and ten years later, in 688, 'Abd al-Malik had renegotiated humiliating peace terms with Justinian II. The tension between these two factors--rumors of vastly increased taxes, and Byzantine military recovery--thus provided an ideal hotbed for eschatological ideas. As products of this ferment we have, not only John of Phenek and Pseudo-Methodios, but also another, shorter, Syriac apocalypse that goes under the name of the Apocalypse of John the Less.<sup>66</sup>

Eschatological speculations seem indeed to have been rife in the late seventh and early eighth centuries, focusing on the recapture of Jerusalem among Christians, and on the destruction of Constantinople among Muslims and Jews,<sup>67</sup> and it is against this wider background that these Syriac texts need to be viewed. John of Phenek and the Apocalypse of John the Less show no interest in the revival of Byzantine power, and this makes Pseudo-Methodios stand out all the more sharply in contrast, for here is an apparently Monophysite writer looking to the re-establishment of Byzantine power--in complete opposition to what was evidently the standard Monophysite attitude that we saw in Michael the Syrian. Pseudo-Methodios is in fact much more in line with what seems to have been the Chalcedonian attitude in Syria, where in the early eighth century John of Damascus was writing hymns which pray for deliverance, at the hands of the Byzantine emperor, from the enemies of Christ, the Ishmaelites.<sup>68</sup> One wonders whether Pseudo-Methodios may not in reality have been a Chalcedonian, whose work (unobjectionable Christologically to the

Monophysites) happens to have been transmitted in Syriac by Monophysite scribes; the fact that the work is also quoted by Nestorian writers perhaps lends support to this suggestion. Such a hypothesis would also explain how the work came to be translated into Greek--an honor achieved by no other Syriac text in this period, as far as I know.<sup>69</sup>

With this piece of speculation, perhaps we could try to draw together the various strands. One thing is quite clear: after only a short period, perhaps just a decade, of uncertainty, people became aware that a new, Arab, empire (malkuta) had arrived on the scene, replacing the Sasanid entirely, and half the Byzantine. In such times the Christian population resorted to the book of Daniel to find divine backing for these major upheavals, and it is this that would seem to be the reason why the seventh century texts use the terms malka, malkuta, of Arab rule, and not because the new rulers corresponded in any obvious way to either the Sasanid or the Byzantine emperors. This explanation of the choice of terminology would be supported by the fact that the Syriac writers were clearly at a loss to describe other figures in the new power structure: since they did not correspond obviously to anything with which they were already familiar, these writers resorted either to colorless terms, such as rishā, head, or to the Arabic ones, duly Syriacized, such as amira.

To writers of every ecclesiastical body there was, without any doubt, some theological reason to be sought for the demise of the two former world empires and the concomitant ills suffered by Christians as a result of the Arab invasions. To the Nestorian and Monophysite communities there was a ready-made answer, based on inter-church relationships: for the Monophysites, the Byzantine defeat was simply a punishment for Chalcedonian arrogance and the persecution under Heraklios, while the Nestorians saw in the hardships they endured divine punishment for the Monophysite successes in northern Mesopotamia, or, alternatively moving to a wider viewpoint, the Arab conquest of the Sasanids was understood as a punishment for Zoroastrianism. The Chalcedonians, on the other hand, were faced with a problem:<sup>70</sup> as long as the Arab presence seemed only temporary, the general laxity and sins of the Christian community could be blamed, but this was a bit drastic when the Byzantine armies bade Syria their final "farewell"; and the monothelete/dyothelite controversy could not continue to be the scapegoat for very long.

It is thus probably the Chalcedonian

community's dilemma, as well as in the worsening conditions for Christians during the second civil war, and fears aroused by the census, that led to the rise of the apocalyptic literature, around 690, which found a ready audience in all three religious communities.

It was perhaps only with Dionysios of Tellmahre (died 845) that we really get a full awareness of Islam as a new religion. Earlier observers had not always been able to distinguish the religion of the Arabs from paganism, although Christians who came into direct contact with the new rulers, such as the patriarchs John and Isho'yahb, certainly knew better, and perhaps it is the story about Heraklios and the first dawn that would best reflect the viewpoint of the majority of Christians under Arab rule--that is, of those who bothered to think about the matter at all.

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## NOTES

1. For a bibliographical survey, see my "Syriac sources for seventh-century history," Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 2 (1976): 17-36. In the present article I use the following abbreviations for frequently cited sources: BH = P. Bédjan, Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Syriacum (Paris: 1890) (English translation in E.A.W. Budge, The Chronography of Barhebraeus (Oxford: 1932); pp. 89-105 of vol. 1 covers the seventh century); Chr. 1234 = J.B. Chabot, Chronicon ad annum 1234 pertinens 1 (C.S.C.O., Scr. Syri 36: 1920) (Latin translation in C.S.C.O., Scr. Syri 56: 1937); MS = J.B. Chabot, Chronique de Michel le Syrien, 4 (Paris: 1899-1924; reprint 1963) (French translation in vol. 2); PsD = J.B. Chabot, Incerti auctoris chronicon pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum 2 (C.S.C.O., Scr. Syri 53: 1933) (French translation by Chabot, Chronique de Denys de Tell-Mahre, quatrième partie (Paris: 1895); pp. 4-11 cover the seventh century).

2. J. Assfalg, Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, V: Syrische Handschriften (Wiesbaden: 1963), no. 5.

3. Ed. H. Usener, in Rheinisches Museum, n.F. 41 (1886), p. 508 (compare p. 515, for hope of recovery).

4. Ep. 14 (Patrologia Graeca 91, col. 540).

5. Ed. N. Bonwetsch, Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati (Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil.-hist.Kl. n.F.12, 3: 1910), p. 63.

6. F. Macler, Histoire d'Héraclius par l'évêque Sebeos (Paris: 1904), pp. 104-5 (section 32, cf. 34); cf. W.E. Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine reactions to the Arab Conquest," Church History 38 (1969): 139-49.

7. See note 1.

8. Cf. R. Abramowski, Dionysius von Tellmahre (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 25.2: 1940), pp. 14 ff.

9. Daniel 5:19

10. Chr. 1234, pp. 236-7; MS 2: 412-3 = 4: 410. They go on to add that the change of rule was

advantageous even though they did not regain control of their churches confiscated under Heraklios, seeing that the Arabs simply maintained the status quo in this matter.

11. R.H. Charles, The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu (London: 1916), 121.2: "all said . . . the victory of the Muslims was due to the wickedness of the emperor Heraklios and his persecution of the orthodox through the patriarch Kyros."

12. Patrologia Graeca 89, col. 1156.

13. Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reactions . . .," p. 142 wrongly tries to identify the Biblical name "Amalek" as a corruption of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ or 'Abd al-Malik.

14. Ed. S.P. Brock in Analecta Bollandiana 91 †(1973): 299-346 (section 23).

15. BH, p. 97; Elias of Nisibis, Opus Chronologicum (ed. E.W. Brooks, C.S.C.O., Scr. Syri 21), Part I, pp. 126-30.

16. MS 2: 403 = 4: 405; Chr. 1234, pp. 227-8.

17. Cf. BH, p. 97: rejection of idolatry would lead to God giving the Arabs "that land of promise"; compare also Sebeos (see Note 6) section 20, and Vardan (J. Muyldermans, La domination arabe en Arménie (Louvain and Paris: 1927), p. 41 (text) = p. 74 (translations)).

18. MS 2: 404 = 4: 406 (MS wrongly has "Law and prophets"); Chr. 1234, p. 229. In BH several anachronistic statements have crept in; e.g. (p. 98) the attribution to the Prophet of the institution of Ramaḍān (contrast Elias of Nisibis (ed. Brooks, p. 131), who credits it to 'Umar, under the year A.H. 14).

19. Ed. F. Nau, "Un colloque du patriarche Jean avec l'émir des Agaréens," Journal asiatique 11 ser. 5 (1915): 225-79 (sections 2, 4). Nau dated the conversation to 639, but 644 is preferred by Lammens (Journal asiatique 11 ser. 13 (1919): 97-110).

20. Chr. 1234, p. 240: "When you enter that land, kill neither old man, nor child nor woman; do not force the stylites to come down from their columns, do not harm the solitaires, because they have set their lives apart to worship God. Do not cut down any tree or lay waste cultivated land, and do not hamstring any domesticated animals, whether cattle or sheep. Establish a covenant with every city and people who receives you, give them assurances and let them live according to their laws and the practices they had before our time. Let them pay tribute in accordance with the sum fixed between you, and let them practise their own religion where

they live. Those, however, who do not receive you, you are to fight, conducting yourselves carefully in accordance with the ordinances and upright laws transmitted to you from God, at the hands of our prophet, so that you do not anger God."

21. MS 2: 431 = 4: 421; cf. Chr. 1234, p. 260; Sebeos section 31.

22. Chr. 1234, p. 261.

23. Chr. 1234, p. 261.

24. BH, pp. 96-7.

25. Also found in the anonymous Nestorian chronicle composed between 670 and 680, ed. I. Guidi, *Chronica Minora I* (C.S.C.O., Scr. Syri 1), p. 38: "The victory of the sons of Ishmael, who overpowered two strong empires, came from God." Cf. C. Cahen, "Note sur l'accueil des chrétiens d'Orient à l'Islam," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 166 (1964): 51-8.

26. See below, p. 16.

27. Syriac life of Maximos (see note 14), 18; the term probably means little more than non-Christian here, and should not be taken as implying the hostile attitude that becomes prevalent in later Byzantine writers (on whom see S. Vryonis, "Byzantine attitudes towards Islam during the late Middle Ages," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 12 (1971): 263-86).

28. MS 2: 421-2 = 4: 416-17; Chr. 1234, pp. 246-7; BH, p. 101.

29. Scholia on Gregory Nazianzen's *Invective* 1, no. 33 (attributed to Nonnus), in *Patrologia Graeca* 36, col. 1004 (English translation of the Syriac version in S.P. Brock, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnus Mythological Scholia* (Cambridge: 1971), pp. 97-8).

30. "Prophet": PsD, p. 149; Chr. 1234, pp. 240, 254, 275; *Apocalypse of John the Less* (see note 66), p. 18; *Elias of Nisibis* (see note 15), p. 126. "Apostle": PsD, p. 149; Chr. 1234, p. 227.

31. E.g. List of Arab "kings," ed. J.P.N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca* 2 (Leiden: 1868), p. 11 of addenda; French translation by F. Nau in *Journal asiatique* 11 ser. 5 (1915): 226 note 1.

32. Iohannan b. Penkaye (ed. A. Mingana, *Sources Syriacae* 1 (Leipzig: 1907), p. 146\*; Chr. 1234, pp. 227, 238. In a late sixth century text it is used of the initiator of a heresy: S.E. and J.S. Assemani, *Bibliothecae Apost. Vaticanae . . . Catalogus*, 3: 65. In the Harklean New Testament (616) haddi translates hodēgein.

33. Chr. 1234, p. 277: *tahlupa da-nbiyeh d-alaha*; 'Uthmān is also addressed as *amira da-mhaymne*.

34. Ed. R. Duval, Isho'yahb Patriarchae III Liber Epistularum (C.S.C.O., Scr. Syri II (translation: 12)), p. 226; the anonymous Nestorian Chronicle (ed. Guidi, see note 25), pp. 30, 31-2) uses mdabbrana, "leader," of both Muhammad and his successors.

35. E.g. in the conversation between the patriarch John and the unnamed emir (see note 19).

36. E.g. Isho'yahb, Liber Epist., p. 97; Chr. 1234, p. 238; colophon of BM Add. 14666, dated A.H. 63; Patriarch Athanasius apud A. Vööbus, Syrische Kanonensammlungen 1 (C.S.C.O., Subsidia 35; 1, p. 200).

37. MS 2: 418, 423 = 4: 414, 416.

38. E.g. colophon of BM Add. 14666 (A.H. 63).

39. Eccl. Hist. 6: 38.

40. For the date, see J.M. Fiey, "Isho'yaw le grand," Orientalia Christiana Periodica 36 (1970): 7.

41. Cf. Fiey, pp. 30-33, 43; also W.G. Young, Patriarch, Shah and Caliph (Rawalpindi: 1974), pp. 85-99.

42. Liber Epist., p. 251; compare note 25.

43. Liber Epist., pp. 248 ff.

44. Liber Epist., p. 97.

45. Ed. Mingana (see note 32), p. 144\*.

46. Liber Epist., p. 237.

47. Liber Epist., p. 266.

48. A. Mingana, "Timothy's Apology for Christianity," in Woodbrooke Studies 2 (Cambridge: 1928), pp. 59, 62.

49. Compare Chr. 1234, p. 240.

50. Compare the story in MS 2: 422 = 4: 417.

51. Ed. Mingana (see note 32), p. 141\*.

52. Ed. Mingana, p. 147\*.

53. Ed. Mingana, p. 147\*.

54. Ed. Mingana, p. 155\*.

55. Ed. Mingana, pp. 165 ff; Isho'yahb (Liber Epist., p. 249) already wonders whether the mass apostasies in Mazon (Oman) did not portray the arrival of the "man of sin." Compare even earlier Maximus, in Patrologia Graeca 91, col. 540. According to Sebeos section 35 the Ishmaelite "chief" is the "grand ally of Antichrist."

56. Ed. Mingana, p. 167\*; see also p. 157\* for the "captives."

57. Vat. syr. 58, ff. 118<sup>b</sup>-137<sup>a</sup>, of 1584. For other Syriac extracts see my "Syriac sources . . ." (note 1), p. 34. On the background, see the literature cited by I. Shahid, in Le Muséon 89 (1976): 174-6.

58. Thus in the title, f. 118<sup>b</sup>.

59. Ff. 126<sup>a</sup>-133<sup>b</sup>.



- 60. Ff. 134<sup>a</sup>-136<sup>a</sup>.
- 61. Ff. 123<sup>b</sup>-126<sup>a</sup>.
- 62. F.136<sup>a</sup>.
- 63. The starting point will be the Hijra, and not the conquest of Iraq, as most scholars have supposed; The Hijra dating is already used for the Nestorian synod of 676 (J.B. Chabot, Synodicon Orientale (Paris: 1902), p. 216 (text) = p. 482 (translation)); likewise John of Phenek (ed. Mingana, p. 160\*): A.H. 67.
- 64. F.129<sup>a-b</sup>.
- 65. PsD, p. 154 (on this muddled passage, see D.C. Dennett, Conversion and Poll Tax in Islam (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1950), pp. 45-6).
- 66. Ed. J.R. Harris, The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles (Cambridge: 1900), pp. 34-9 (translation), 15\*-21\* (text).
- 67. Cf. A. Vasiliev, "Medieval ideas of the end of the world: west and east," Byzantion 16 (1942/3): 473 f.
- 68. Cf. J. Meyendorff, "Byzantine views of Islam," Dumbarton Oaks Papers 18 (1964): 118; on John of Damascus, see in general D.J. Sahas, John of Damascus on Islam (Leiden: 1972).
- 69. Isaac of Nineveh was translated into Greek in the ninth century.
- 70. Cf. Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine reactions . . ." (note 6), p. 149.

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*Note:* The Prefix 'al-' is ignored in the alphabetical ordering of entries.

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